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# STUDIES IN THE MARVELLOUS

BY

BENJAMIN P. KURTZ

*Assistant Professor of English  
in the University of California*

T. FISHER UNWIN  
LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE  
LEIPSIK: INSELSTRASSE 20  
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## PREFACE.

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This book is the expansion of a thesis of the same title submitted in 1905 to the English Department of the University of California in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I wish gratefully to acknowledge the constant help afforded me in the preparation of these papers by Professor Charles Mills Gayley. In no way is he to be held responsible for the views here expressed; but hardly could they have taken shape without his friendly and unfailing criticism.

BERKELEY, March, 1909.





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Ταῦτα τοίνυν ἔστι μὲν ξύμπαντα ἐκ ταύτου πάθους, καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ἕτερα μυρία, καὶ τούτων ἔτι θαυμαστότερα· διὰ δὲ χρόνου πλῆθος, τὰ μὲν αὐτῶν ἀπέσβηκε, τὰ δὲ, διεσπαρμένα εἴρηται χωρὶς ἕκαστα ἀπ' ἀλλήλων. ὁ δ' ἔστι πάσι τούτοις αἴτιον τὸ πάθος, οὐδείς εἴρηκε. νῦν δὲ δὴ λεκτέον. εἰς γὰρ τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως ἀπόδειξιν πρέψει ρήθην.—Plato: *Politicus*, 269B.

“All these stories, and ten thousand others which are still more wonderful, have a common origin; many of them have been lost in the lapse of ages, or are repeated only in a disconnected form; but the origin of them is what no one has told, and may as well be told now; for the tale is suited to throw light on the nature of the king.”

Tr., Benjamin Jowett, *Dialogues of Plato*, iv, 467.

“... dieser (der Mythos) als eine vom Volke selbst geschaffene Welt von Phantasiebildern blieb im Alterthum immer der Hauptinhalt der Dichtung auch in der Zeit der Verstandesbildung, nur dass nun das poetische Bild von der prosaischen Wirklichkeit unterschieden wurde.”

A. Boeckh, *Encyk. u. Method. d. Philol. Wisschftn.*,  
2d ed., Leipzig 1886, p. 649.

“... But little by little, in what seemed the most spontaneous fiction, a more comprehensive study of the sources of poetry and romance begins to disclose a cause for each fancy, an education that has led up to each train of thought, a store of inherited materials from out of which each province of the poet's land has been shaped, and built over, and peopled.”

E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, i, 273.

# STUDIES IN THE MARVELLOUS.

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## INTRODUCTION.

The marvellous in Romance—Its profusion, and recurrent character—Its neglect by literary criticism—Aristotle—Desultory and fragmentary nature of wonder-criticism after Aristotle—Data furnished by the ethnologists—The opportunity for a criticism of the marvellous—Purpose and plan of the present work—History of the usage of the term “marvellous”—as an intensive—as denoting the supernatural—in other languages—Suggestiveness of these usages.

Throughout the course of romance one element occurs continually,—the marvellous. In the literature of every age its presence is provocative of pleasure or criticism upon the part of the reading or learned public. In the myth and legend of the barbarian it multiplies under religious and faithful sanction. With the rise of a critical philosophy it is subjected to searching analysis; but no philosophy or science of a few can check its advance, for it lives perennially in the hearts and in the superstitions of the ignorant masses. When a self-conscious epic art develops, the adoption and handling of the prodigious become subjects of acrimonious dispute.<sup>1</sup> The European Middle Ages contributed to occidental marvel a renovation, and a new impulse along both sacred and profane lines. Chivalry, that romantic institution of the wonderful, belonged, as Professor Woodberry has well said, “to a world of marvel, where the unknown, even in geography, was a large constituent element, and magie, superstition, and devildom were so rife as to be almost parts of the human mind.”<sup>2</sup> Medieval Metrical Romance perpetuated all

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ker, *Epic and Romance*, 1897, pp. 34, 39.

<sup>2</sup> G. E. Woodberry, in *McClure's Magazine*, April, 1905. Vol. XXIV, p. 621. (Art. *Cervantes*.)

this in a literary form; and, after the skepticism of the Age of Reason had dwindled, the same themes lived again in the modern romanticist's keen delight in wonder and amplification.<sup>3</sup> The mood of marvel was making its way back into English literature of the eighteenth century even while Robert Anderson, travelling through Scotch scenes in "moralizing mood," was at pains to asperse it thus in a letter to the wonder-loving Bishop of Dromore: "I surveyed for the first time the scenery of the Border Ballads, and visited the ancient castles of the Border chiefs, the dens of thieves and robbers. I sat on the ruins of Hermitage, in a moralizing rather than a marvellous mood, so that I saw neither Redcap nor Shellycoat; and indeed the creatures of popular superstition live only in legends, and no longer haunt these peaceful valleys."<sup>4</sup>

While reading this letter from Robert Anderson, it occurred to me that there is an opportunity for research into the treatment of the marvellous in literature. For, while most of the principles and elements of literary art enumerated by Aristotle in the *Poetics* have received a systematic and comparative illustration from the hands of such modern critics as Brunetière, Texte, Beljame, Paris, and Gautier, the important literary ingredient here called the marvellous, which is mentioned repeatedly in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of the *Poetics*, has not as yet been exploited by any modern literary critic of the scientific school. It is possible to go even further, and say that nothing of comprehensive scope has been written upon the wonderful by any literary student of any school of criticism since Aristotle in a fragmentary way marked out its scope in epic and tragedy, and incidentally declared its justification under the broader category of poetic truth. Opinions of the moment, to be sure, mere asides from other investigations, have often been thrown out, from Plato or Horace down; and the ancients occasionally made collections of wonder-stories, such as the famous pseudo-Aristotelian ΠΕΡΙ ΘΑΥΜΑΣΙΩΝ ΑΚΟΤΣΜΑΤΩΝ. Photius (Vol. 3, Col. 413) quaintly notices one of these latter as consisting of four books, one each on

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, London 1762, p. 319. (No. X.)

<sup>4</sup> Nichols, *Illustrations, etc.*, London 1817-58, VII, 187.

the following subjects: of incredible fiction, of incredible stories about demons, of incredible tales of souls appearing after death, of incredible things of nature. But these had no more purpose of literary criticism than did the moralistic and philosophic objections of the Greek philosophers who descended upon Homer for employing incredible and impious tales about the gods. The self-conscious epic art of the Italian Renaissance, of Ariosto and Tasso, drew in its wake an acrimonious and voluminous disputation upon the place of the prodigious in epic composition; but the criticism was always dogmatic, *a priori*, and partisan—never comparative and inductive. The same is true of the English echoes of that continental battle of the books. D'Avenant, Hurd, Pope, Addison, and others, contributed their not infrequent, but always tentative, paragraphs to the question of the proper place of wonder in the various literary types. Fielding, in one of his asides in *Tom Jones*, discoursed wittily upon the proper use of wonder in his own art. There is an extremely sketchy essay by Yardley upon *The Supernatural in Romantic Fiction*,<sup>5</sup> which stands very lonely in the midst of modern criticism along other lines. Now and then have appeared short essays upon the habits of particular authors or periods in dealing with the wonderful, such as Dyer's essay upon the folk-lore in Shakespeare,<sup>6</sup> or Bodmer's antiquated monograph upon the angels in *Paradise Lost*.<sup>7</sup> A collection of medieval wonders in the sixth volume of the *Studien zur vergleichenden Literaturgeschichte* suggests the sort of preliminary collection of data which must precede any methodical inquiry upon the subject. A classification of the wonders in French literature of the age of Louis XIV has been made by Delaporte.<sup>8</sup> The most encouraging work that has yet appeared is Reitzenstein's *Hellenistische Wundererzählungen*.<sup>9</sup> In this monograph, undertaken primarily as a study in theological criticism, the author argues for the derivation of much of the

<sup>5</sup> London 1880.

<sup>6</sup> Dyer, T. F., *Folk-Lore of Shakespeare*, New York 1884.

<sup>7</sup> Bodmer, *Kritische Abhandlung von dem Wunderbaren in der Poesie*, Zürich 1740.

<sup>8</sup> P. V. Delaporte, *Du Merveilleux dans la Littérature Française sous le Règne de Louis XIV.*, Paris 1891.

<sup>9</sup> Reitzenstein, *Hellenistische Wundererzählungen*, Leipzig, 1906.

wonder-element in early Christian literature from Hellenistic sources; and incidentally he distinguishes two types of separate origin, the Hellenistic wonder tale (or aretalogy, as he calls it), and the Hellenistic romance.

But if the marvellous has failed to receive a satisfactory treatment at the hands of literary students, in another direction it has been investigated with surprising fulness. The students of ethnology and folk-lore have, with purposes quite other than those of literary criticism, brought together, and partially classified, a vast number of marvels drawn from primitive and popular religious belief, custom, and superstition. It is hardly necessary to cite the long roster of those who in all parts of the learned world are following in the steps of Lord Avebury, Spencer, Tylor, Frazer, and Béranger-Féraud. By the systematic and devoted efforts of this great band of modern humanists, there has been brought together a mass of observations and explanations of the marvellous element in belief and story, which, though quite independent of any literary interpretation, nevertheless is by all odds the most considerable achievement in the study of the wonderful, not only since the time of Aristotle, but in all time. Such works, to mention only English examples, as *The Origins of Civilization*, *Primitive Culture*, *The Golden Bough*, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, or *The Legend of Perseus*, are as monumental to the success attending the application of the methods of scientific research to spiritual matters as they are unique in the history of humanism.

Dr. Tylor, speaking in the light of his long investigations, has said, in the first volume of his *Primitive Culture*, that "little by little, in what seemed the most spontaneous fiction, a more comprehensive study of the sources of poetry and romance begins to disclose a cause for each fancy, an education that has led up to each train of thought, a store of inherited materials from out of which each province of the poet's land has been shaped, and built over, and peopled." Than this statement, based upon the scientific accumulations of Tylor and his fellow-students, there could be nothing more encouraging to the literary student who might wish to take up Aristotle's observations and expand them into a coherent presentation of the function and development of

the marvellous in literature. Here, ready to his hand, is a body of data and principles, which needs only an application of the literary point of view, and the addition of further data, strictly literary, which did not enter into the view of the ethnologists, to be reduced to a history and theory of the appearance, function, and development of the literary use of the wonderful. Here are the keys to a literary criticism of the marvellous that will show the relations between the various cases or details of wonder before they were incorporated in literary beginnings, during the processes of that incorporation, and through their subsequent stages of literary development. By following successively the constantly changing relations of the wonder-element in literature to other elements, and to the general principles, of literary art and evolution; by observing its concomitant and relative positions in the various literary types at the different periods of their development; by determining the evolution of particular marvels as they are influenced or determined by parallel changes in the technique and consciousness of the literary artist; by explicating the sometimes obvious, the sometimes subtle, influence of contemporary philosophic or scientific criticism of the marvellous upon the vitality and popularity of wonder in purely literary usage; by generalizations concerning the inspiration offered by wonder to the individual artist at various stages of his own or the race's development,—by such employments as these that peculiarly basic element in literary interest, which, as Aristotle readily observed, persuades good story-tellers, consciously or unconsciously, to add something wonderful to their recitals, would receive the consistent treatment and illustration obviously demanded by its prime, but slightly recognized, importance.

The studies included in this book represent a series of preliminary attempts to supply the need of a literary criticism of the marvellous, and to make use, for this purpose, of the data collected by the ethnologists. Each one of these attempts has been undertaken separately, with a view to approaching the subject from various points of vantage; and so strictly have the facts been followed that the postponement of conclusions to a regular position behind the data has often enjoined a rather bulky

handling of the argument. Whatever relations there may be between the studies is the result of identity of the object under consideration in each case—not of any concatenated theory of the rise of the marvellous and its development into literary form. Inevitably many such relations have developed: the conclusions based upon them have been rigorously deferred to the close of every chapter, and are collected at the end of the volume.

The methods adopted, or rather the points of view, were arrived at simply. The first study endeavors to gain some orientation toward the subject by tracing in detail the history of what Greek literary criticism had to say on the use of the marvellous. Thus the warrant in previous criticism for the present undertaking can be determined, while at the same time the various moments and trends in the development of Greek criticism, themselves considered as stages in the development of the marvellous in literature, are revealed. The next study is an effort toward the attainment of some general psychological criteria of wonder. It is believed that the subjective nature of the wonderful makes such a standard absolutely imperative. This subjective aspect of the problem is frankly conceded at the outset. These essays are very intentionally studies in subjective phenomena. It is not conceived that the subjective character of the work can be extended as an objection to its value or practicability by those who themselves have indulged in researches into the tragic, the comic, the satiric, the beautiful, and the like, in literature; nor yet by those who have studied the nature and development of either art or belief. The third chapter begins to take up the ethnological evidence. It regards the general fields of primitive belief and custom in order to determine what in them may be the general forces and conditions relative to wonder and the wonderful. In the final study, a particular primitive people, the Central Australians, are brought before the reader; and, after a discussion of their cultural conditions, their actual legends, as reported by investigators who lived among them for a long time, are contemplated and resolved into elements which do possess, or do not possess, wonder. So far as is possible, by piecing together evidence and inference, these elements are



discussed in view of their relations to any inceptive literary treatment they have undergone in the course of being handed down in tradition and legend. In a word, this last study of the present collection is an investigation of the first, actual, positive step taken by what are nowadays called marvels, out of their beginnings in belief and custom, and into their modification at the hands of the earliest type of narrative art. It is the first stage of the story-marvel.

In the course of these studies one question will continually recur: What is the exact meaning of the word *marvellous*? As a preliminary consideration of this difficulty, a brief notice of the use and definition of the word may be conveniently inserted at this place. It will be seen, moreover, that the history of the use and meaning of the word bears very directly on the entire problem before us.

Upon the part of one of the least superstitious minds of the nineteenth century there is a striking use of the word *marvellous*. In the last essay of the last book published by Herbert Spencer this passage occurs: "Concerning the multitudes of remarkable relations among lines and among spaces very few ever ask—Why are they so? Perhaps the question may in later years be raised, as it has been in myself, by some of the more conspicuously *marvellous* truths now grouped under the title of 'the Geometry of Position.' Many of these are so astounding that but for the presence of ocular proof they would be incredible; and by their *marvellousness*, as well as by their beauty, they serve, in some minds at least, to raise the unanswerable question—How came there to exist among the parts of this seemingly-structureless vacancy we call Space, these strange relations? How does it happen that the blank form of things presents us with truths as incomprehensible as do the things it contains?"<sup>10</sup>

The way in which the word "*marvellous*" is used in this quotation offers a suggestive starting point for the discussion of the general use of the substantive and its derivatives. On the one hand, it will be noted that these space-relations, which are pro-

<sup>10</sup> H. Spencer, *Facts and Comments*, New York 1902, pp. 290-291. The italics are mine.

nounced marvellous, are by ocular proof actual realities. There is about them nothing that is strange to the order of nature. There is no supernatural intrusion. They are extraordinary only to a limited observation; strange only to the mind unaccustomed to waiting upon them. On the other hand, there is a note of sublimity in the emotion with which they are regarded. Now the application of the adjective "marvellous" to such associations illustrates a very general use of the term, and one that it has always exercised,—the designation of the extraordinary that is within the realm of possibility, but has about it an air of sublimity. At present this connotation belongs to the literary or learned use of the word. It is a heavier word than the Saxon equivalent, "wonder,"—"a little more wonderful than wonderful." In Spencer's sentence, "wonderful" cannot be substituted for "marvellous" without a loss of emphasis.

But, as a variation of this usage, the word, still applied to the possible, is often employed in the familiar fashion of a mere intensive to express conditions, the extraordinary character of which is comparatively low and insignificant in degree. In Middle English, *merveil*, *marveyle* (or any other of its dozen or more spellings) was used oftener in this more familiar way than in the more sublime connotation. Extraordinary adventures were always dubbed marvellous, as:

Lat no clerk haue cause or diligence  
To wryte of yow a storie of swich meruaille  
As of Grisildis pacient and kynde,<sup>11</sup>

or,

He made so grete merueyll of armes, that the Frensmen durst not comforth for fere of hym.<sup>12</sup>

Distinguished service of any kind might be termed a matter of marvel. Thus:

Saturnus after his exile fro Crete cam in great perile  
Into the londes of Itaile,  
And there he did great merveile.  
For he founde of his own wit  
The first crafte of ploughtilling.<sup>13</sup>

The extreme familiarity of the word as a mere intensive, is illustrated by

<sup>11</sup> Chaucer, *C. T.*, II E, 1185.

<sup>12</sup> Caxt. *S. of Aym.*, p. 79.

<sup>13</sup> Gower, II, 168.

De Saxons . . . broughte wiþ hem Hengistus his daughter, a wonderful faire mayde, mervellious of kynde and wonder sightly for men to byholde.<sup>14</sup>

In the verb form this extreme familiarity is especially common in Middle English romances. "He merueyled him," or the like, is a part of the stock phraseology of the old tale-tellers, and suggests nothing more than amazement, or wonder; thus:

Whan Reynawde sawe so grete nombre of folke comynge oute of the wode, he was sore merveylled.<sup>15</sup>

With the Elizabethans, too, the more familiar usage is that oftener met with.

A mad-man that haunts the Fayre, doe you not know him? it's maruell he has not more followers, after his ragged heeles.<sup>16</sup>

Shakespeare, in the great majority of cases, as may easily be seen by consulting Dr. Schmidt's *Shakespeare-Lexicon*, employs the word familiarly, while he reserves wonder and wonderful for cases of rarer moment.

Good faith, this same young sober-blooded boy doth not love me; nor a man cannot make him laugh; but that's no marvel, he drinks no wine.<sup>17</sup>

With the dramatist, too, the adverbial use, signifying "very," "extraordinarily," is common. "Marvellous searching wine," "marvellous convenient place," "marvellous hairy about the face," and the like, are to be found in every play. On the other hand, English of the present has lost this ready, French use of the word, but inherits a looseness of application, on the part of the hyperbolically minded at least, which almost takes its place in colloquial life.

The extraordinary that is still within the realm of possibility, if not of probability, that posits nothing that is contrary to the law of nature, is thus, either in its familiar cases or in its sublimer effects, termed the marvellous. But there is another and equally well-established use of the word marvel, which connotes that which is distinctly supernatural or closely associated with the vague realms of unknown possibilities. It has always designated the impossible, the incredible, the miraculous. Romance and legend are full of this use:

<sup>14</sup> Trevisa, V, 267-9.

<sup>15</sup> Caxt. *S. of Aym.*, p. 137.

<sup>16</sup> Nightingale (of Trouble-all), in B. Jonson's *Barthol. Fair*, III, 2.

<sup>17</sup> *King Henry IV*, B, IV, 3, 96.

Now ye, þat wylyð wonderes her, hearkeneð maruayle,  
How þat chyld with a fendes fere Dede batayle,<sup>18</sup>

or,

Forth þe meruaile of the greal be don,<sup>19</sup>

Often it is employed thus to designate the magical machines of sorcery :

Dis solere was be sorsry seleuthely foundid,  
Made for a mervall to meene with engine ;  
Twenti tamed oliphants turned it aboute.<sup>20</sup>

Especially rich in examples of the application of the word to the miraculous is the old literature of the Church. *The Golden Legend*, for instance, knows many such. The dissipation of marvels in which the saints, say St. Brandon or St. Margaret, indulged, puts many a secular romance to shame. Eight centuries later Shakespeare is not nearly so fond of this use of the term. Schmidt cites only a few cases.<sup>21</sup> The revival of romance in the eighteenth century saw the entrance of this usage into a new favor, to which Fanny Burney bore witness, somewhat sarcastically, when she wrote in her Preface to *Evelina*: "Let me, therefore, prepare for disappointment those who, in the perusal of these sheets, entertain the gentle expectation of being transported to the fantastic regions of Romance, where Fiction is colored by all the gay tints of luxurious Imagination, where reason is an outcast, and where the sublimity of the *Marvellous* rejects all aid from sober Probability."

No illustration is needed of the present use of the word in this specific sense of the supernatural.

It may now be remarked with considerable emphasis that these uses of the term marvellous are not peculiar to the English language. The same word in the Latin languages and its equivalent in the German tongues are found, peculiarly enough, in each case to carry the same variety of connotation. The familiar and the more sublime uses, the popular and more learned "fringes" of association, on the one hand, and the connotation of the merely unusual or of the distinctly supernatural, of the

<sup>18</sup> *Octon.*, 903, Sarr.

<sup>19</sup> *Arth. a. Merl.*, 4293, Kölb.

<sup>20</sup> *Wars of Alex.*, 5291, Ashmol.

<sup>21</sup> *Hamlet*, 1, 2, 195.

naturally extraordinary or of the impossible and incredible, on the other hand, are all to be found in the Romance and Germanic languages alike. Littré, for example, defines *merveille* as "Chose qui cause de l'admiration"; such, *e.g.*, as the Seven Wonders of the World. Again, in the next subdivision of his definition, we read "Familièrement. Ce n'est pas grande merveille, ou, par ironie, voilà une belle merveille, ou, elliptiquement, belle merveille, belles merveilles, se dit pour rabaisser une chose, une action que quelqu'un veut faire passer pour admirable." The connotation of the supernatural is referred to thus: "Chose qui, excitant l'étonnement, paraît dépasser les forces de la nature"; and under *merveilleux* he writes: "L'intervention d'êtres surnaturels comme dieux, anges, démons, génies, fées, dans les poèmes et autres ouvrages d'imagination."<sup>22</sup>

Here, then, is an interesting state of affairs. Quite universally the civilized languages seem to unite in attributing to their respective equivalents of the word wonder, or marvel, a similar set of variations in meaning. In each case these variations run from the sublimely intensive to the familiar, and from the supernatural to the unusual but possible. Such a verbal fact as this, with its hint of a mental trait common to the race, might, *a priori*, seem rich in suggestion; and it carries us naturally forward to an inquiry into the mental states and experiences symbolized in these equivalent words. It may be that such an investigation will bring to us a realization of the way in which the mind, receiving and working over the observations of the senses, has come, consciously or unconsciously, to apply to two sets of phenomena, supposedly widely different in origin, and even diametrically opposed, a single term, which it uses with equal facility for the familiar and the prodigious. Does the history of a word here, as is the case with other words and other subjects, contain some vague but suggestive testimony as to the origin and nature of the metaphysical conception?<sup>23</sup> In the second chapter we shall recur to this question.

<sup>22</sup> For similar usage in other languages it is only necessary to turn to the dictionaries, *s. v.* *Wunder* in German; *maraviglia* in Italian; *miror*, *mirus*, *admirabilis*, in Latin; *θαυμάζω*, *θαύμα*, etc., in Greek.

<sup>23</sup> Compare below, p. 92. On the differentiation of *wonderful* and *marvellous*, see below, p. 75.

## CHAPTER I.

### GREEK CRITICISM OF FICTION AND MARVEL.

Outline of method—The philosophical doubt: (*a*) the earlier expostulation with myth; (*b*) Pindar and the 'Charis Doctrine'; (*c*) Xenophanes; (*d*) Empedocles; (*e*) Plato—Philosophical attempts to explain the marvel in myth: (*a*) the allegorists; (*b*) Euhemerism—The beginnings of literary criticism proper: (*a*) Aristotle; (*b*) Dionysius of Halicarnassus; (*c*) 'Demetrius'; (*d*) Plutarch; (*e*) 'Longinus'—Minor philosophers, rhetoricians, etc.—Conclusion: eight general points.

To Greek philosophy the presence of the marvellous in Homer and in Greek mythology in general was a cause of constant worry. From Xenophanes to Simplicius the philosophic line was haunted by the unquiet spirit of an inability to acquiesce in the Homeric *ἀπίθανα*. All other elements of the epic were accepted with a religious enthusiasm and implicit faith. Indeed, everything, from the ideal conduct of government to the proper way of turning a horse,<sup>1</sup> might be, and was, by many an early 'saint' or later sophist, deduced from the Homeric rule; but from Xenophanes down, philosophers and the sons of philosophers, nay the educated class at large, found their piety forever disturbed by the *ἀπίθανα*. Along with the blind and errant struggle toward a right adjustment of the Homeric fictions to life and literature, this restless doubt takes its way from the palmiest age of Greek thought, through checkered centuries, to the closing of the schools by Justinian. Like some new stream striving to find its way through obstructions to a clear and open course, and making trial of each turn and twist, now this depression and again that, so the Greek persuasion that all was not right with the marvellous and impious stories of the ancient bard makes many a turn and counter before it discovers the only possible adjustment,—a literary criticism that will, in marking out the peculiar territory of the literature of power, provide therein for the proper use and place of the wonderful and impossible.

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<sup>1</sup> See Xenophon's satirical remarks in the *Banquet*, § iv.

For such a solution the search was not only often misdirected; it was also unsystematic. In the whole course of discussion the problem was never exhaustively stated, never categorically investigated. Throughout the discussion the marvellous was seldom separated from the broader category of fiction. Furthermore, problems of literary justification of the use of fiction, and so of the marvellous, were attacked as problems in ethical and historical justification. In the mass of the resulting confusion it is not strange that the simple, impartial question, "What has been the evolution of the literary use, especially in the older poets, of the untrue?" was preceded by the biased question, "How can we make the old and impious poetic usage harmonize with our present standards of truth and piety?" The ancient critic argued from two incompatible premises,—that the older poets always spoke truthfully and piously, and that the critic's own vision was always true and pious. When particular cases revealed the contradiction in these premises the critic had either to deny the universality of the first premise, or confess the error of his own deepest intuition, or gloss the premises into harmony. At first he was surprised into a denial of tradition; later he was scared into apologetics and confusion, lest the quaking ground of truth be destroyed under his feet. In that confusion the marvellous as such, *i.e.*, as differentiated from fiction, was mentioned casually rather than categorically. Often the notice was fragmentary,—incidental to a discussion of truth in general. Often it occurred as a mere illustration of a theme. Often it was merely tentative,—a wonder at a wonder, or a 'When-I-was-a-child-I-believed-as-a-child'-statement, as when Philostratus says: *Παῖς μὲν γὰρ ὦν ἔτι ἐπίστανον τοῖς τοιούτοις, καὶ κατεμυθολόγει με ἡ τίτθη χαριέντως αὐτὰ ἐπάδουσα καὶ τι καὶ κλαίονσα ἐπ' ἐνίοις αὐτῶν, μειράκιον δὲ γενόμενος οὐκ ἀβασανίστως φήθηεν χρῆναι προσδέχσθαι ταῦτα.*<sup>2</sup>

But from the formless mass of these notices the account of Greek criticism of the marvellous must be patched together. Some men indeed, Plato and the rest, made a great hue and cry over the fictions of the poet; and so came a fine quarrelling back and forth between the poet and sage,—though to be sure the sage,

<sup>2</sup> Philostratus, *Heroic Dialogues*, § 668 (ed., Kayser-Teubner).

being after all the more irritable of the two, blew the louder in that cacophony. It will be convenient first to gather the notices from this source; and an examination of Xenophanes, Empedocles, and Plato will give us a fair idea of the general nature of the problem of fiction and the marvellous in literature as it confronted the early philosophers. In the course of the whole matter, however, Greek intelligence, proving itself not very different from that of a modern apologist, found, of course, a ready compromise in allegorical interpretation. Anaxagoras, or was it Theagenes of Rhegium<sup>3</sup>, first began this sin to cover a sin, this lie to habilitate a lie; and each lie begot successive lies in the most approved fashion of such theological vagaries, until Alexandria was full of the useless spawn, which ceased not even with Hypatia. The long and futile tale of this attempt at adjustment by means of the allegory may be sufficiently illustrated by gathering the *loci* from Anaxagoras and the earlier school, who began it all, from Plato who deprecated it, and from Maximus Tyrius, Porphyry, and Julian, who may serve as examples of the Neoplatonic devotion to this, the most palpable of expedients. After these Euhemerus and his followers must be briefly mentioned. In the fourth place, Aristotle, Plutarch, and Longinus, with two or three of lesser name, will form another class,—the most important of all, since they were happy enough to come nearest to a final and correct adjustment of the matter. Finally, passing away from philosophy proper, that other wearisome line of criticism, the Alexandrian and Byzantine, must be glanced at. Hermogenes, Aphthonius, Theon, and Photius will serve to illustrate this class.

Such they are—philosophers, sophists, and scientists, theologians and rhetoricians—all haunted by this flaw in the epics,—*τὰ ἀπιθὰνα*. They all took up the search for a solution; and, because each sort answered in a characteristic fashion, the above classification of their answers has been deemed more convenient to a presentation of the unsystematic mass of criticism than would be a scheme based strictly upon chronological sequence.

To begin, then, with the philosophical doubt, and the quarrel which came therefrom between poet and sage! Xenophanes, the

<sup>3</sup> See below, pp. 31-32.



Eleatic of the sixth century before Christ, stands out as the first to make much of the philosophic objection to myth and marvel in Homer. But before him there had been grumblings. The gradual separation of Greek philosophy and religion from their combination in myth, and their differentiation one from another, was marked first of all by an ethical attack upon the blasphemous deeds and characters attributed to the gods. It is important to insist that this first attack was not, primarily, an attack directed by love of fact against the marvellous elements in myths; but rather a moral expostulation with those circumstances, marvellous and otherwise, of Greek story, that ill harmonized with a pure and sublime conception of deity. The marvel was morally, rather than rationally, impossible. In place of such disgraceful stories as that of Ares and Aphrodite, or those of the amours of even the highest gods; in place of the boastings of Zeus, the thefts of Hermes, or the insatiate war-god's cries on the field of Ilium,—a new and less anthropomorphic idea of the divinities early began to make its way. Solon and Theogonis, in the sixth and seventh centuries, are said to have renounced the fabulous myths of Homer and Hesiod, and to have anticipated the philosophers proper by setting up a system which rested on ethical and metaphysical principles.<sup>4</sup> Alemaeon, who flourished in the middle of the sixth century and was a pupil of Pythagoras, maintains in the fragment of his treatise (said to be the first) on natural philosophy (*φυσικὸν λόγον*) preserved by Diogenes Laertius, that “about things invisible, and things mortal, the gods alone have a certain knowledge; but men may form conjectures.”<sup>5</sup> Here indeed is a piece of early skepticism, on the part of a philosopher, which, though it may not contain a direct criticism of the marvel-myths, yet indicates a fecund ground for the growth of such observation. Heraclitus, too, at the close of the same century, recognized the limits of human knowledge when he declared that the people did not know the real nature of the gods and heroes.<sup>6</sup> This is that

<sup>4</sup> Egger, *Hist. Crit. Grec.*, 2d ed., p. 92.

<sup>5</sup> *Περὶ τῶν ἀφανέων, περὶ τῶν θνητῶν σαφήνειαν μὲν θεοὶ ἔχοντι, ὡς δ' ἀνθρώποις τεκμαίρεσθαι.*—Diog. L., VIII, 83; Diels, *Fragm. Vorsokr.*, Frag. I.

<sup>6</sup> *Καὶ τοῖς ἀγάλλμασι δὲ τουτέουσιν εἴχονται ὁκοῖον εἰ τις ὁμοίσι λεσχηνεύοιτο· οὐδ' ἂν γινώσκων θεοὺς οὐδ' ἥρωας οὔτινές εἰσι.*—Diels, *Fragm. Vorsokr.*, Frag. V. Cf. Frag. CXXVIII.

same philosopher whom Diogenes reports as having said that Homer and Archilochus should have been driven from the games, apparently because their learning did not, according to Heraclitus, inform the mind of the one, true, all-ruling idea.<sup>7</sup>

But these early grumblings of law-givers and philosophers are shared by a man of quite another stamp,—the lyric poet, Pindar. “Pindare lui-même, ce lyrique si enthousiaste, Pindare, qui définit la sagesse une science innée (σοφὸς ὁ πολλὰ εἰδὼς φύῃ), c’est-à-dire une science donnée à l’âme par la faveur du ciel, Pindare néanmoins n’est pas exempt de doutes sur les dieux de l’Olympe.”<sup>8</sup> “Verily,” cries the poet, “many things are wondrous, and haply tales decked out with cunning fables beyond the truth make false men’s speech concerning them. For Charis, who maketh all things sweet for mortal men, by lending honour unto such maketh oft the unbelievable thing to be believed; but the days that follow after are the wisest witnesses. Meet it is for a man that concerning gods he speak honourably; for the reproach is less.”<sup>9</sup> And then the ode continues by substituting for the old disgraceful story of Pelops a new version more flattering to the honour of the gods. Such a performance as this,<sup>10</sup> is, in its subject at least, if not in its beauty, quite a part of the philosophical grumble. In the doctrine of Charis, however, Pindar is centuries ahead of his time. This doctrine, though it breathes something of the rationalistic air of our philosophers, and is advanced more as an accusation than as a defense of the fictions of the poet, contains, nevertheless, the first suggestion of the proper attitude of literary criticism toward the use of the marvellous in literature. This is not the ethical attitude of the natural philosopher; it is the aesthetic attitude of the poet. Charis, beauty, says Pindar, beauty of presentation, lends belief to the unbelievable, makes the impossible possible. He is not yet ready to say that Charis renders the marvellous legitimate to the hand of the poet: it only makes possible a deception which must be guarded against, and to the

<sup>7</sup> Diog. L., IX, I.

<sup>8</sup> Egger, *Hist. Crit. Grec.*, p. 92.

<sup>9</sup> O. I., 42 ff., Tr., E. Myers, *Odes of Pindar*, London 1899, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> For another of the same kind, see O. IX, 35 ff.

nature of which "the days that follow are the wisest witnesses." In another passage the same point of view is occupied with regard to the fame of Odysseus; and there, since the impious application of unworthy characters to the gods is absent, the tone is somewhat less philosophical and more purely aesthetic. The passage occurs in *Nem.* VII, 20ff: "Now I have suspicion that the fame of Odysseus is become greater than his toils, through the sweet lays that Homer sang; for over the feigning of his winged craft something of majesty abideth, and the excellence of his skill persuadeth us to his fables unaware."<sup>11</sup> The criticism of the untrue and unbelievable in literature, which is here shadowed forth in what may, for convenience sake, be called the 'Charis Doctrine,' comes thus as a suggestion from the days long before literary criticism grew to a separate and conscious discipline. For our purpose, it is, perhaps, the most notable *locus* to be found before Aristotle.

Literature is indeed a fragment of fragments. One realizes that with peculiar vividness as he turns the pages of Diels<sup>12</sup> and Karsten.<sup>13</sup> In the century that intervened between the years when Thales was starting a physical philosophy in place of the old mythical cosmology, and the days of the Samian Pythagoras<sup>14</sup> and Xenophanes the Eleatic, many an animadversion must have been directed against the fabulous theology of Homer and Hesiod.<sup>15</sup> Yet from all those years our literary remains are so meagre that it is not until Xenophanes is reached that the mumblings of the time, caught in the references noted in the previous paragraph, break into clear and unmistakable speech. With him the ethical objection takes the form of a definite and reiterated charge of anthropomorphism against Homer and Hesiod. Homer and Hesiod, he says, have attributed to the gods everything that by men is held disgraceful and blameworthy.—

<sup>11</sup> Myers, *Odes of Pindar*, p. 127.

<sup>12</sup> H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin 1903.

<sup>13</sup> Karsten, *Philosophorum Græcorum Veterum Reliquiæ*, Amstelodami 1830-8. For a convenient English edition, see Fairbanks, A., *The First Philosophers of Greece*, London 1898.

<sup>14</sup> For Pythagoras' criticism, see Diog. L., VIII, 19.

<sup>15</sup> Cf., e.g., Hecataeus (Herod. II, 143). See Gomperz, T., *Greek Thinkers*, tr., Magnus-Berry, Scribners 1905, sub. *Hecataeus*.

theft, deception, and adultery.<sup>16</sup> Men think the gods were born as men were born, and that they have form, countenance, and habit such as mortals have.<sup>17</sup> And if animals had hands wherewith to fashion images, as men have done, they would give to the gods animal forms like their own; and the gods of horses would have the shapes of horses, those of oxen the shape of oxen.<sup>18</sup> But, in truth, he observes, there is but one supreme God; and He is like mortals in neither form nor mind.<sup>19</sup> There could be no clearer charge against the poets and popular belief—hardly a completer statement of Xenophanes' own conception of the sublimity of the deity—than is conveyed in observations of this kind.

For a criticism of the marvellous in myth, such ethical objections to the vulgar anthropomorphism of Homeric story are obviously more than a fertile field. They actually include, as a part of the wider moral view which is concerned with all improprieties of deific character, the particular cases the impropriety of which is traceable to foolish exaggerations or impossible fictions. The marvellous is by its very nature part and parcel of the ethical irrationalism against which Xenophanes and his successors lift their voices. Indeed, in the twenty-first fragment, Xenophanes distinctly mentions certain marvels, such as the battles of Titans, Giants, and Centaurs, which he contemptuously calls fictions of the ancients (*πλάσματα τῶν προτέρων*) and would exclude from the tales told at feasts for the entertain-

<sup>16</sup> Πάντα θεοῖς ἀνέθηκαν Ὀμηρὸς θ' Ἡσιόδοός τε  
 ὅσσα παρ' ἀνθρώποισιν ἐνείδεα καὶ ψόγος ἐστὶ,  
 καὶ πλεῖστ' ἐφθέγγξαντο θεῶν ἀθεμίστια ἔργα,  
 κλέπτειν, μοιχεύειν τε καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀπατεύειν.

—Karsten, *op. cit.*, I, Frg. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Ἀλλὰ βροτοὶ δοκίουσι θεοὺς γεννᾶσθαι—  
 τὴν σφετέρην ἐσθῆτα τ' ἔχειν μορφὴν τε δέμας τε.

—Karsten I, Frg. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Ἀλλ' εἴτοι χεῖράς γ' εἶχον βόες ἢ ἑλόντες,  
 ἢ γράψαι χεῖρεσσι καὶ ἔργα τελεῖν ἄπερ ἄνδρες,  
 ἵπποι μὲν θ' ἵπποισι, βόες δέ τε βουσὶν ὁμοῖοι,  
 καὶ τε θεῶν ἰδέας ἔγραφον καὶ σώματ' ἐποίουν  
 τοιαῦθ', οἷον περ καὶ αὐτοὶ δέμας εἶχον ὅμοιον.

—Karsten I, Frg. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Εἷς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος,  
 οὔτε δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοῖος οὔτε νόημα.

—Karsten I, Frg. 1.

ment of the company.<sup>20</sup> But the conclusion of the fragment (*θεῶν δὲ προμηθείην αἰὲν*, etc.) shows that the objection to these marvels was still ethical,—such battles were poor witnesses of the justice of the gods.

Literary criticism is being trundled by philosophy. But it is interesting to observe that this early promise of a literary criticism occurs partly in the form of a judgment against the marvellous and unbelievable character of much of the earliest literature. Such a circumstance at least gives a notable genealogy to any criticism which intends to investigate the use of the wonderful in literature.

Empedocles, teaching the persistence of all things, and that birth and death are only changes in the round, puts love in the midst as the dynamic principle, and says that men call it Delight, or Aphrodite: *Γηθοσύνην καλέοντες ἐπώνυμον ἥδ' Ἀφροδίτην*.<sup>21</sup> From the four elements and their combinations spring all things, trees and men and women and animals, birds and fish, and the gods themselves, long-living and richest in honor.<sup>22</sup> These four elements men call Zeus, Hera, Aidoneus and Nestis.<sup>23</sup> In the beginning, parts of animals sprang from the earth: "many heads sprouted up without necks, and naked arms went wandering forlorn of shoulders, and solitary eyes were straying destitute of foreheads."<sup>24</sup> These parts, wandering about, came together in haphazard fashion, whence all sorts of strange forms,—double-faced, double-breasted, man-like before and ox-like behind, or the bodies of men with the head of cattle.<sup>25</sup> And of the making of men and women, of the conflict of love and strife in forming all these and the universe in general, many more examples might be drawn from Empedocles' *ΠΕΡΙ ΦΥΣΕΩΣ*. Throughout the fragments of this work (Diels enumerates one hundred and

<sup>20</sup> *Οὔτι μάχας διέπειν Τιτῆνων οὐδὲ Γιγάντων  
οὐδέ τε Κενταύρων, πλάσματα τῶν προτέρων,  
ἢ στάσις, φλεδόνας τοῖς οὐδὲν χρηζὸν ἔνεστι·  
θεῶν δὲ προμηθείην αἰὲν ἔχειν ἀγαθήν.*

—Karsten I, Frg. 21.

<sup>21</sup> Diels, Frg. 17.

<sup>22</sup> *Ib.*, Frg. 21.

<sup>23</sup> *Ib.*, Frg. 6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ib.*, Frg. 57, Tr., Symonds, *The Greek Poets*, Vol. I, Ch. VII.

<sup>25</sup> *Ib.*, Frg. 61.

eleven) is evident the rationalizing tendency illustrated in the quotations above. With something of allegory, as in the case of the Four Elements just noted, there is a great deal of theory, physical and metaphysical, which replaces the old fabulous cosmology. It is especially interesting to observe at what pains he is to account for the marvellous mixed-forms of legend and tradition.

But this rationalizing tendency, in which he is quite at one with the early natural philosophers, illustrates but one side of the character of this strangest of men. If this were his only side, it would perhaps be more proper to deal with him in company with the allegorists. Those other and more interesting aspects of the man, by virtue of which he stands out from the shadows of the past as a romantic figure crowned with fillets and luxuriant garlands, walking in majestic purple through "the great city hard by the yellow stream of Acragas"—as a reveller in mysticism and magic, whom Gorgias often saw at his secret rites—as a thaumaturgical pretender, half-charlatan and self-confessed god,—those are the characters of the man built forth in his ΚΑΘΑΡΜΟΙ. Here, indeed, between the two aspects of the man, is a strange contradiction. As Rohde puts it: "Empedokles vereinigt in sich in eigenthümlicher Weise die nüchternsten Bestrebungen einer nach Kräften rationellen Naturforschung mit ganz irrationalem Glauben und theologischer Speculation. Bisweilen wirkt ein wissenschaftlicher Trieb auch bis in den Bereich seines Glaubens hinüber. Zumeist aber stehen in seiner Vorstellungswelt Theologie und Naturwissenschaft unverbunden neben einander."<sup>26</sup> Symonds has hit off this contradictory character of the man to still better effect. There are men, as he says, "in whom two natures cross—the poet and the philosopher, the mountebank and the seer, the divine and the fortune-teller, the rigorous analyst and the retailer of old wives' tales. But none have equalled Empedocles, in whose capacious idiosyncrasy the most opposite qualities found ample room for co-existence, who sincerely claimed the supernatural faculties which Paracelsus must have only half believed, and who lived at a time when poetry and fact were indistinguishably mingled,

<sup>26</sup> Rohde, E., *Psyche*, Leipzig 1903, II, 174-175.

and when the world was still absorbed in dreams of a past golden age, and in rich foreshadowings of a boundless future.'<sup>27</sup>

And it is before the wonder-side of this man, before this nature which is all compact of love for the marvellous, that we naturally pause in the history of wonder. For the criticism of the marvellous no contributions can be found in what remains to us of the great Lustral Poem. Still, Empedocles is a name of prime importance in the development of a criticism of the wonderful. The contradictions in the character of the man give a living example of the opposing forces at work in the mass of the people of that century. And from these opposite forces—the one, a gathering impetus of rationalism, invading the ancient and ever-ready credulity of the other—contemporary criticism derived its nature,—somewhat timid and tentative, rarely as clear and certain as the cry of Xenophanes, and with its stricter science ever offset by a copious mysticism. Again, the figure of Empedocles is an illuminating introduction to the teachings of his greater but younger contemporary, Plato. Because of their contradictions of character a comparison may be drawn between these two. Their rationalizing doctrines are to be reconciled with their mysticism and belief in the marvellous by remembering the nature of the times in which they lived—transitional, engaged in the breaking up of mythology into its separate disciplines of philosophy, religion, and science—and by remembering also that they were rationalizing a popular mythology beyond which they caught glimpses of a still greater marvel.

The transition, then, from Empedocles to Plato, is easy. Postponing for a moment the consideration of Plato's criticism of the use of the marvellous in literature, we may examine the contradictions in his general attitude toward the more fabulous elements of the culture of his time.

Upon Plato,<sup>28</sup> living in an age that was beginning to deny its mythic fancies and yet was ready to wonder at the alleged marvels and miracles of an Empedocles, and content to admit that strange man's claim of divinity, the clouds of mythology do indeed still

<sup>27</sup> Symonds, *Grk. Poets*, I, Ch. VII.

<sup>28</sup> References to Plato are as follows: Greek text,—paging and lettering of Stephanus; translation,—Jowett, *Dialogues of Plato*, 5 vols., 3d ed., by volume and page.

rest.<sup>29</sup> In his attitude, or rather, to be exact, his attitudes, toward dreams, ghosts, magic, clairvoyancy, witchcraft, the existence of the gods, and mythology in general, there is an uncertainty, a blowing now this way, now that, which may indeed be partly explained by those natural changes in belief and outlook that take place in the course of an individual's intellectual development, or by those variations in exposition called esoteric and exoteric, the cause of which is the necessity of tempering the preachment to the capacities of different audiences: or it may be repeated, by those fond of the saying, that it is often difficult to determine which is Plato's opinion, which that of an interlocutor. But the nice parallel between this particular philosopher's apparent indecision, which at times permits direct contradictions,<sup>30</sup> and the unsettled state of the minds of men in general of that age, is too alluring and obvious to be passed over. For a fact, the prevailing psychosis of Plato, whenever he regarded the marvellous, was not of that clear and stubbornly insistent make found in our experimental philosophers: it was rather of that type in which an imagination subtly apt to mystical beauties exists side by side with an intellect keenly on the leash for strict and searching criticism. Poet-philosopher he was; and in that, too, he was a child of his age.

A few examples may illustrate this indecision of attitude toward the marvellous. Toward dreams, for instance, and divination by dreams, Plato seems to have exhibited in general a discouraging front<sup>31</sup>; moreover, the *Timaeus* gives for them a material explanation.<sup>32</sup> Yet Plato represents Socrates as rightly very scrupulous concerning the behest of the dream that bade him to "make music."<sup>33</sup> Of ghosts, and other apparitions, to change the illustration, his speech is almost uniformly slighting, and in an unbelieving tone.<sup>34</sup> Yet in the second example (*Phaedo*, 81) he makes direct use of the popular belief in order to lend

<sup>29</sup> Jowett, III, 421.

<sup>30</sup> Compare Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, Lib. I, § XII.

<sup>31</sup> Jowett, III, 493-494 (*Timaeus* 71-72); V, 297 (*Laws* 909-910).

<sup>32</sup> *Ib.*, III, 465 (*Timaeus* 45-46).

<sup>33</sup> *Ib.*, II, 198 (*Phaedo* 60). Compare Plutarch, *On Hearing Poems*, § 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ib.*, V, 120, 297 (*Laws* 738, 910); II, 224 (*Phaedo* 81). Compare also III, 493 (*Timaeus* 71).



weight to his theory. Indeed, this passage shows well the poetic and imaginative method of Plato, by which he establishes relations between popular superstitions and his own philosophical speculations, while discrediting wholly, or in part, the superstitions. Magic, clairvoyancy, and witchcraft, he thinks, belong to the prophets and priests, who may know more about them than common people. They are things concerning which it is hard to know anything for certain. Plato is not quite prepared to denounce them as pure deception and illusion. But their practice and belief by the common people is roundly condemned, and in another place a material explanation of the whole matter is offered.<sup>35</sup> Plato believes in gods, demi-gods, and heroes. Yet he speaks ironically of the popular belief in them, and says that we know their names, nay, their very existence, only from what the poets fable of them. Their names are the inventions of men. We know nothing of them. And yet as a philosopher he argues at length for their existence, and says the ancients were nearer than the moderns to the gods.<sup>36</sup> In prophecy, and in madness of the inspired sort, the "noblest of the arts," he also believes.<sup>37</sup> Of mythology he holds that much is a picture of the probable, not of the actually real. In accordance with this belief he does not hesitate to devise myths of his own for didactic purposes. Again, he would account for some part of myth by attributing to the ancients a figurative way of speaking. But this suggestion of rationalization remains abortive; and Plato professes he has no time to waste upon the foolishness of the allegorists. Yet, to what in mythology appears to him ethically unfit, he objects as untrue. He is concerned, indeed, less with the strictly marvellous, than with the ethically base in custom and manner, word and performance. Gorgans and Pegasi he calls "inconceivable and portentous natures," but he does not clearly object to their employment in tales.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Ib.*, III, 493-494. Compare p. 409; V, 322. Compare V, 28, 296; III, 43.

<sup>36</sup> *Ib.*, III, 76; II, 120-121; V, 96, 100, 108, 120, 122, 183, 231, etc.; Index under *demi-gods, etc.*; I, 340-341; III, 528, 45; IV, 55; V, 270, 275ff.

<sup>37</sup> *Ib.*, I, 450, 473.

<sup>38</sup> *Rep.* 614 ff., *Statesman* 269 ff., *Phaedrus* 259, *Gorgias* 523, etc.; *Theatetus* 180, cf. III, 61, 493; II, 78-79; III, 60 ff.; V, 421; III, 75, 307 ff.; I, 434; III, 530-531.

It is this ethical objection to the unfit, to that which degrades the ideal of deity and the moral fibre of the youth, that gives Plato his point of view for the literary use of fiction.

With Plato the quarrel between poetry and philosophy reaches its most serious phase. The poets, from whom alone, says Plato, the existence of the gods is known,<sup>39</sup> and who "have ever been the great story-tellers of mankind,"<sup>40</sup> are formally and categorically accused of "telling lies, and, what is more, bad lies." "But when is this fault committed?" asks Adeimantus. Socrates answers: "Whenever an erroneous representation is made of the nature of gods and heroes,—as when a painter paints a portrait not having the shadow of a likeness to the original." As examples of such fictions Socrates mentions the stories of Uranus and Cronus, the battles of the giants, the binding of Here by Hephaestus, Zeus' punishment of Hephaestus, the battles of the gods in Homer,<sup>41</sup> "and innumerable other quarrels of gods and heroes with their friends and relatives." In due order, then, are given a list of particulars in which the poets have offended. They have not hallowed the name of God, but have made him an author of evil;<sup>42</sup> they have represented God changing and passing into many forms, as a magician might do, whereas God never changes from his perfection of form;<sup>43</sup> nor would God make by witchcraft any such false representation of himself or another as the poets represent him doing when he sends the lying dream to Agamemnon;<sup>44</sup> Homer and the other poets have represented the world below in a most discouraging light;<sup>45</sup> they have also pictured the heroes, and even the gods, as pitifully weeping or foolishly laughing,<sup>46</sup> as untruthful, and intemperate to the degree of indecency and impiety;<sup>47</sup> witness the Aphrodite episode, or Achilles' treatment of Hector's corpse at the tomb of Patroclus, or "the tale of Theseus, son of Poseidon,

<sup>39</sup> *Rep.* II, 365E.

<sup>40</sup> *Rep.* II, 377D.

<sup>41</sup> *Rep.* II, 377-378.

<sup>42</sup> *Rep.* II, 379-380; *cf.* Democritus, Diels, *Fr.* 175.

<sup>43</sup> *Rep.* II, 380-381.

<sup>44</sup> *Rep.* II, 381-383.

<sup>45</sup> *Rep.* III, 386-387.

<sup>46</sup> *Rep.* III, 387-389.

<sup>47</sup> *Rep.* III, 389-391.

or of Peirithous, son of Zeus, going forth as they did to perpetrate a horrid rape; or of any other hero or son of a god daring to do such impious and dreadful things as they falsely ascribe to them in our day."<sup>48</sup> "And let us further compel the poets," Socrates continues, "to declare either that these acts were not done by them, or that they were not the sons of gods;—both in the same breath they shall not be permitted to affirm."<sup>49</sup>

Such is the list of formal accusations preferred by Plato in this famous trial of the poets. It is hardly necessary to point out that the basis of the charge in each case is the same ethical objection to immoral representations of deity that had been stirring during the previous two centuries.<sup>50</sup> Here the hints of Pindar, the clarion cry of Xenophanes, and the murmurings of Heraclitus are gathered and expanded with due premeditation.

But the immediate purpose of the prosecution gives what may be called an economic air to the ethical expostulation. The tremendous influence exercised in the ancient Greek state by poetry made it necessary, when there was in contemplation a republic which was designed to be "an imitation of the best and noblest life,"<sup>51</sup> to deliberate carefully upon the question of the position of the poet in the prospective city. Plato decides that the untruthful, impious, and blasphemous habits of the poets, illustrated in the charges brought against them, do not conduce to the moral welfare of the youth and citizens of a republic. But a state cannot stand firm or reach its highest possibilities if its youth are to be educated by lies and abominations in place of a pure and sublime representation of the goodness and justice of the gods. That is an economic, to say nothing of a moral, impossibility. Plato, therefore, to insure the stability of his state

<sup>48</sup> Jowett, III, 75.

<sup>49</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Plato himself is careful to explain that he objects to certain fictions of Homer and the other poets "not because they are unpoetical, or unattractive to the popular ear, but because the greater the poetical charm of them, the less are they meet for the ears of boys and men who are meant to be free, and who should fear slavery more than death." (*Rep.* III, 387A, Jowett III, 69.) The passage well illustrates the inveteracy of Plato's moral view. Fair writing that renders bad fiction pleasant to the popular (notice the implication) ear is no excuse for the existence of the passage. All the worse!

<sup>51</sup> *Laws* VII, 817A.

in the truth and purity of its youth, to realize economic advantage from ethical incorruptibility, provides in his ideal city for "a censorship of the writers of fiction" (*ἐπιστατητέον τοῖς μυθοποιοῖς*).<sup>52</sup>

This economic censorship of the poets, however, is not intended to repress all fiction. "Let the censors receive any tale of fiction which is good, and reject the bad." Plato's quarrel with a tale is not begun because the tale is untrue, but because it is impiously untrue. "We will desire mothers and nurses to tell their children the authorised ones (*i.e.*, fictions) only. Let them fashion the minds with such tales, even more fondly than they would the body with their hands; but most of those which are now in use must be discarded."<sup>53</sup> And again, speaking of mythology, he says, "Because we do not know the truth about ancient times, we make falsehood as much like truth as we can, and so turn it to account."<sup>54</sup> Such a recognition of the good uses of fiction shows clearly enough that whatever may have been Plato's real belief touching the myths, he approved of their use in literature so long as a careful censorship set before the public only those tales calculated by their moral propriety to elevate the minds of the people. Moreover, Plato's own repeated invention and use of the fable for purposes of instruction, one of the most striking features of his teaching,<sup>55</sup> is proof obvious of his moral approval of such literary usage.

There is then, in a word, not only an ethical objection to fiction, but also an ethical recommendation. In such recommendation lay the germ of a possible development of an aesthetic theory of the technical propriety of fiction; but the negating zeal attendant upon the prohibition was so great as to quite overshadow the promise latent in the more positive permission. It remained for a more prosaic successor and keener analyst to take that technical step from the ethical commendation.

<sup>52</sup> *Rep.* II, 377B.

<sup>53</sup> *Rep.* II, 377C.

<sup>54</sup> *Rep.* II, 382D.

<sup>55</sup> (*Cf.*, *e.g.*, the myth of Er (*Republic* X, 614ff.), or of the creation of man (*Protag.* 320C ff.), or of the soul (*Phaedr.* 245-257), or of the origin of love (*Symp.* 191, 192). For others, see Jowett, Index, Vol. V, 475, *sub Myth.* For Plato's expressed attitude ("Myth more interesting than argument") toward these fictions, see *Protag.* 320C; Jowett IV, 431-433.

Finally, in this economic-ethical consideration of fiction in general, what of the marvellous, that particular kind or degree of fiction? In many cases, the battles of the giants, for instance, or Hephaestus' capture of Aphrodite and Ares, the objectionable fiction possesses elements that are obviously marvellous; moreover, strictly speaking, all god-stories are instances of marvellous fiction, and Plato himself so calls them in the *Euthyphro*.<sup>56</sup> But Plato does not, as we have noticed, object to all the fictions of mythology; nor, where there are elements that stand, by contrast to the very matter-of-fact conduct of much in mythic fable, as strikingly wonderful, is the *casus belli* the marvel so much as the moral. In two of the charges preferred against the poets there is indeed mention of particular marvel-elements; and the mention is in each case accompanied with a slur. "Shall I ask you whether God is a magician, and of a nature to appear insidiously now in one shape, and now in another?" asks Socrates.<sup>57</sup> And a little further on he follows the matter up with a second question: "But although the gods are themselves unchangeable, still by *witchcraft and deception* they may make us think that they appear in various forms?"<sup>58</sup> Magic and witchcraft are, indubitably, marvels; but in spite of the slur with which they are mentioned, and in spite of Plato's denunciation elsewhere<sup>59</sup> of their practice, no distinct objection to them *qua* marvellous and im-

<sup>56</sup> *Soc.* May not this be the reason, *Euthyphro*, why I am charged with impiety—that I cannot away with these stories about the gods? and therefore I suppose that people think me wrong. But, as you who are well informed about them approve of them, I cannot do better than assent to your superior wisdom. What else can I say, confessing as I do, that I know nothing about them? Tell me, for the love of Zeus, whether you really believe they are true.

*Euth.* Yes, Socrates; and things more wonderful (*θαυμασιώτερα*) still, of which the world is in ignorance.—*Euthyphro* 6A, Jowett II, 79-80.

<sup>57</sup> *Rep.* II, 380D.

<sup>58</sup> *Rep.* II, 381E.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Rep.* X, 602C-D; *Laws* X, 909-910; *Laws* XI, 933. In a passage in the *Republic* (*Rep.* II, 364-367), Orphic magic is denounced, and those passages in the poets which teach that the gods may be controlled by the arts of men, are deprecated. But the objection is there, again, not to the marvel, but to the immoral influence of such passages upon youthful minds. (*Rep.* II, 365A.) Indeed, Plato himself, though fully aware of the unnaturalness of magic and the like, and inclined to disbelief (*vid.* *Laws* XI, 933A), was yet by no means sure such things were wholly illusions. "Now it is not easy to know the nature of all these things (sorceries, incantation, magic knots, etc)," he continues in the passage just noted. "Nor if a man do know can he readily persuade others to believe him."

possible is raised here. In the *Phaedrus*, in a passage to which we shall recur in speaking of the allegorists, Plato speaks of Gorgons and Pegasi, Hippocentaurs and Chimeras dire, "and numberless other *inconceivable and portentous natures*."<sup>60</sup> But there is no literary criticism in the passage.

The sum of the matter, then, is that Plato, in direct criticism of the marvellous as such, offers no more than do his predecessors. Like them, his objection is more to the ethically irrational than the naturally impossible; and he surveys in his objections the whole field of fiction rather than the particular territory of the wonderful. But, on the other hand, it must be remembered that that fiction is the fiction of myth and legend, of god-story and hero-story, of the two primary and most important forms undertaken by the marvelling activity. All such fiction is at heart fabulous; and, though religious belief in the myth, or an anthropomorphic conduct of the story, may convert wonder to an illusion of every-day reality, it yet remains true that a criticism of such fiction, ethical at first, as is natural considering its religious rather than re-creative force, is the field from which in later, less believing, and more scientific days a true literary criticism must spring. Plato sowed that field richly where the Pre-Socratics had sowed before him. So far he was at one with them. But he went a step further, as we have shown above. He gave to certain fiction, to certain stories of those wonderful beings, the gods, an ethical encouragement. He found for them an ethical and economic legitimacy. And, moreover, that very addition of an economic idea was a first step away from the ethical bondage of literary criticism. It was a lay tendency springing from the theological preoccupation of the time, and an adumbration of a criticism which in becoming completely secular would first achieve literary truth.

Thus, the quarrel between poet and philosopher, based upon a religious or ethical consideration, came to a head in Plato by his categorical expansion and uncompromising expression of that consideration; thus, too, in Plato, by his addition of an economic reason, the first step away from the old theological quarrel was taken; and thus, finally, after having re-sowed and newly marked

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<sup>60</sup> *Phaedrus* 229E.

the field from which might spring a technical criticism of fiction, Plato started the growth by an ethical commendation, which, in turn, was succeeded by an aesthetic judgment from the mouth of his great pupil.

But before proceeding to Aristotle, who will give us the first, and almost the last word in the matter, so far as Greek criticism is concerned, it is necessary to pause a moment and contemplate two compromises offered in the quarrel of poet and sage by the philosophers themselves.

In the first place, it was proposed that the myths were, properly taken, allegories. By this means the morally shocking and irrational elements could be explained away. To valuable criticism this compromise, by launching an endless discussion and interpretation of myths from the unchecked fancies of numberless "umbratrical doctors," was fatal. The absurdities to which the allegorists became subject are too well known to make their rehearsal here a matter of moment. The historian Phaborinus says that Anaxagoras, in the fifth century before Christ, was the first to declare the Homeric poems an allegory "composed in praise of virtue and justice."<sup>61</sup> According to another report Theagenes of Rhegium had that doubtful honor.<sup>62</sup> Phaborinus goes on to say that Metrodorus of Lampsacus,<sup>63</sup> the friend of Anaxagoras, carried this sort of interpretation further. Plato mentions Glaucón and Stesimbrotus the Thasian, as sharing with Metrodorus the allegorical method.<sup>64</sup> Plato himself, as we have seen, found no time to investigate this theory of mythology. spoke of it in slighting fashion, and believed it usually to be introduced first when "cities have leisure."<sup>65</sup> Xenophon ridicules the allegorical theory by making Socrates poke fun at the pedant Niccratus (who can recite all of Homer). Soerates compliments the pedant on being far above the public ballad-singers.

<sup>61</sup> *Fragmenta Historicorum Græcorum* (Müller, C.), III, 581, Frg. 26; quoted by Diog. L. in his Life of Anaxagoras, § VII.

<sup>62</sup> See Lobeck, *Aglaophamus* I, § 20 ff., where the matter of allegorical interpretation is discussed at length. See also Wolf, *Prolog. ad Hom.*, CLXI.

<sup>63</sup> Diels, *Frag. Vorsokr.*, p. 339.

<sup>64</sup> *Ion* 530C; Jowett, I, 496.

<sup>65</sup> *Phacdrus* 229C-230A; *Critias* 110A.

"Δῆλον γάρ, ἔφη ὁ Σωκράτης, ὅτι τὰς ὑπονοίας οὐκ ἐπίστανται. σὺ δὲ Στησιμβρότῳ τε καὶ Ἀναξιμάνδρῳ καὶ ἄλλοις πολλοῖς πολὺν δέδωκας ἀργύριον, ὥστε οὐδέν σε τῶν πολλοῦ ἀξίων λέληθε."<sup>66</sup>

But in spite of ridicule<sup>67</sup> the doctrine flourished through a long line of learned names. Among the Neoplatonists, to carry the matter beyond our present date and have done with it, Porphyry's *De Antro Nympharum* is typical. The Emperor Julian, in the fourth century after Christ, allegorizes the myths after the Neoplatonic fashion in his orations *To the Son* and *To the Mother of the Gods*.<sup>68</sup> How the habit crept into Christian commentary, as in Origen, and how there, as well as in secular literature,<sup>69</sup> it persisted on through the Middle Ages (and is not dead yet), is a story as monotonous as it is useless.

The second solution, or compromise, of the philosophical doubt, may with convenience be mentioned side by side with the allegorical solution, though it was not broached until after the death of Aristotle. Euhemerus (whose date De Block<sup>70</sup> puts approximately at 330-240 B.C.), with his well-known proposal to refer the myths to human subjects, shows that by the time of Aristotle men were ready easily to approach the subject from a strictly secular point of view. Indeed, De Block thinks that Euhemerus did not make even a serious, *bona fide* attempt at a solution. His purpose was not, says De Block, to discover the truth through an impartial study of the traditions concerning the gods: his work belongs, rather, "dans cette catégorie d'œuvres hybrides où la fiction sert à développer et à vulgariser quelque système de philosophie politique, morale ou religieuse."<sup>71</sup> In a word the book is a *roman philosophique*, one of those fables of the philosophers or historians discussed by Chassang,<sup>72</sup>—such as Plato's *Atlantis* or Xenophon's

<sup>66</sup> Xenophon, *Banquet* III, 6. Cf., also IV, 7, 8,—the celebrated "onions and wine" passage.

<sup>67</sup> See, e.g., Plutarch, *How to Hear Poems*, § 4. Ed., Goodwin, "Morals," Boston 1883, Vol. 2, p. 54.

<sup>68</sup> Tr., Thomas Taylor, London 1793.

<sup>69</sup> Tzetzes, for example. See Saintsbury, *Hist. Crit.*, I, 187.

<sup>70</sup> R. De Block, *Euhémère, son Livre et sa Doctrine*, Mons 1876.

<sup>71</sup> *Ib.*, p. 53.

<sup>72</sup> Chassang, *Hist. du Roman etc.*, Paris 1862.



*Cyropaedia*. Nor, in all probability, was Euhemerus the first to advance the theory that goes by his name.<sup>73</sup>

If indeed we are to regard the work of the allegorists and the euhemerists as appertaining to literary criticism, and Saintsbury remarks that the allegorical and rationalistic interpretation of Homer probably constitutes the earliest Greek literary criticism,<sup>74</sup> we must at least acknowledge that so far as a consideration of the legitimacy of fiction in fine literature and of its proper use and management is concerned, neither school presents anything at all. The purpose in the case of either discipline does not embrace such a consideration in its purview. The purpose is less literary than it is religious or ethical. Both schools are working under the old moral impetus. And though they deal constantly with tales of wonder, there is no sign of an attempt at philosophizing over, or criticizing, the place of the marvellous in literature. In offering their solutions of the impious and impossible in myth, they, like Xenophanes and Plato, are testifying to a time when the impossible, or at least the morally impossible, in literature, was regarded as a moral blemish. Here they were at one with other minds of their times. But, in going beyond an expostulation to apply a solution, these two schools started an inquiry which in course of time has become completely secular and scientific, and bears as its ultimate fruit the present school of ethnological or comparative mythology. For the Greeks, here, as elsewhere in their literary criticism, the lack of a comparative view prevented that realization of the actual nature and value of an element which the criticism of the present has learned to appreciate from the knowledge contributed by comparative ethnology.

After disposing of these two attempts at a solution of the origin and purpose of the myths, the main course of the development of a criticism of marvellous fiction may be resumed in the work of Aristotle. The many-sidedness and penetration of the Stagira's mind is well illustrated by the fact that in spite of his skeptical attitude as a scientist and philosopher toward the won-

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<sup>73</sup> De Bloek, *op. cit.*, p. 65 ff.; for the successors of Euhemerus, see Deeharme, P., *La Critique des Traditions Religieuses chez les Grecs*, Paris 1904, pp. 381-393.

<sup>74</sup> Saintsbury, *Hist. Crit.*, I, 10-11.

derful, which is well illustrated by his remark concerning the Theogonists' fabulous systems of philosophy to the effect that it is "not worth while to consider them seriously,"<sup>75</sup> he nevertheless was able, as a literary critic, to survey quite seriously the place of fiction and the marvellous (*τὸ θαυμαστόν*) in literature. Aristotle did not mix his points of view. Instead of declaiming with Plato a moral anathema against the poets, or, like the allegorists, proposing for literary faults some convenient panacea distilled from an extra-technical source, Aristotle immediately proclaimed that heretofore the sacred character and moral influence of Homeric and Hesiodic literature had in part prevented pious criticism from seeing clearly. Against those who decried poetry as a lie dealing with perversions, instead of representations, of facts, Aristotle boldly asserted that there is a poetic truth differing from and transcending historical truth,<sup>76</sup> and that poetry properly describes not only what is, but also what is said or thought to be, and what ought to be.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, so far did Aristotle push this view, which has since become well known as the doctrine of higher reality in art, that, as Professor Saintsbury remarks,<sup>78</sup> fiction and poetry were to him practically coëxtensive and synonymous. Aristotle's elaboration of the doctrine need not detain us here. Professor Butcher, by the third chapter of his *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, has brought all students of the doctrine into his debt for an exhaustive exegesis of those parts of the text which open out this view. Merely for convenience it may be stated by way of reminder that Aristotle, in answering the critical objection that the poet is in the habit of describing the impossible or what is not true to fact, holds that the impossible may be justified by an appeal to

<sup>75</sup> It is also interesting in this connection to remember that lukewarm attitude of Aristotle toward deity and other religious mysteries that won for him among the early Christians a suspicious neglect. It is remarkable that from Aristotle, who by reason of his scientific and materialistic character might have seemed far less likely to do justice in such an affair than would one of his more imaginative predecessors, came the first real justification of fiction and the use of the fabulous in literature. Here, indeed, is a plume in the hat of the empiricists!

<sup>76</sup> *Poetics* IX, 2-6.

<sup>77</sup> *Poetics*, XXV, 1. (All references to the *Poetics* are to Butcher's edition: *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, 3d. ed., 1902.)

<sup>78</sup> *Hist. Crit.* I, 31. Cf. *Poetics* IX, 1-3.

artistic requirements, higher reality (the "ought to be"), or received opinion.<sup>79</sup> The irrational is justly censured when for its introduction there is found no inner necessity.<sup>80</sup> In a word, as Aristotle puts it, with direct innuendo to Plato: "The standard of correctness is not the same in poetry and *politics*, any more than in poetry and any other art."<sup>81</sup>

The twenty-fifth chapter of the *Poetics*, that involved piece of writing in which this view of poetic fiction is expounded, marks the birth of a true, technical literary criticism of fiction from the lap of the moral and idealistic philosophy of the previous centuries.<sup>82</sup> It would be strange if there were no notice here of that heightened or exaggerated degree of fiction called the marvellous. Such a notice, in the brief note-book manner of the *Poetics*, is found in the closing sections of the preceding chapter. The passage is of such importance as to demand quotation in full. The author is engaged in noting the points of difference between Epic and Tragic Poetry. After contrasting the length and metre of epos and tragedy, he continues: "The element of the wonderful (τὸ θαυμαστόν) is admitted in Tragedy. The irrational (τὸ ἄλογον), on which the wonderful depends for its chief effects, has wider scope in Epic poetry, because there the person acting is not seen. Thus, the pursuit of Hector would be ludicrous if placed upon the stage—the Greeks standing still and not joining in the pursuit, and Achilles waving them back. But in the Epic poem the absurdity passes unnoticed. Now the wonderful is pleasing: as may be inferred from the fact that, in telling a story, every one adds something startling of his own, knowing that his hearers like it. It is Homer who has chiefly taught other poets the art of telling lies skilfully. The secret of it lies in a fallacy. For, assuming that if one thing is or becomes, a second is or becomes, men imagine that, if the second is, the first likewise is

<sup>79</sup> *Poetics*, XXV, 17.

<sup>80</sup> *Poetics* XXV, 19.

<sup>81</sup> *Poetics* XXV, 3.

<sup>82</sup> It is of course to be remembered that another stream of criticism—grammatical and verbal, of Sophist and Rhetorician—which has not been noted here because contributing nothing to the subject in hand, was yet instrumental in bringing to birth the general criticism of Aristotle, and therefore, in some part at least, his particular criticism of fiction. Cf. Mitchell Carroll, *Aristotle's Poetics*, C. XXV, Baltimore 1895, pp. 11-12.

or becomes. But this a false inference. Hence, where the first thing is untrue, it is quite unnecessary, provided the second be true, to add that the first is or has become. For the mind, knowing the second to be true, falsely infers the truth of the first. There is an example of this in the Bath Scene of the *Odyssey*.<sup>83</sup>

“Accordingly, the poet should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities. The tragic plot must not be composed of irrational parts. Everything irrational should, if possible, be excluded; or, at all events, it should lie outside the action of the play (as, in the *Oedipus*, the hero’s ignorance as to the manner of Laius’ death); not within the drama,—as in the *Electra*, the messenger’s account of the Pythian Games; or, as in the *Mysians*, the man who comes from Tegea to Mysia without speaking. The plea that otherwise the plot would have been ruined, is ridiculous; such a plot should not in the first instance be constructed. But once the irrational has been introduced and an air of likelihood imparted to it, we must accept it in spite of the absurdity. Take even the irrational incidents in the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus is left upon the shore of Ithaca.<sup>84</sup> How intolerable even these might have been would be apparent if an inferior poet were to treat the subject. As it is, the absurdity is veiled by the poetic charm with which the poet invests it.”<sup>85</sup>

Professor Butcher in commenting on this passage remarks: “The fiction here intended is, as the context shows, not simply that fiction which is blended with fact in every poetic narrative of real events. The reference here is rather to those *tales of a strange and marvellous character*, which are admitted into epic more freely than into dramatic poetry.”<sup>86</sup> Such an interpretation of the passage is undoubtedly the right one. *Τὸ θαυμαστόν* is an expression reserved to this chapter; it does not occur in the wider discussion of general poetic truth contained in the twenty-fifth section. Moreover, at least two of the illustrations, that from the *Mysians* and the following one from the *Odyssey*, have a distinct element of marvel. But, for the rest, there is such a

<sup>83</sup> See Butcher, *op. cit.*, p. 172 note.

<sup>84</sup> *Od.* XIII, 93ff.

<sup>85</sup> Butcher, pp. 95-97 (*Poetics* XXIV, 8-10).

<sup>86</sup> *Ib.*, p. 171. Cf., to the same effect, Twining, *Aristotle's Treatise on Poetry*, II, 346ff (1789).

loose handling of the words *θαυμαστόν*, *ἄλογα*, and *ἀδύνατα* (the wonderful, irrational, and impossible) that it is hard not only to determine the exact bearing of the different parts and illustrations of the paragraphs, but even the exact meaning and relations of the terms themselves. In spite of these difficulties, which need not be enlarged upon here, these thirty-odd lines contain well-nigh the entire gist of all Greek criticism of the proper use of the marvellous in literature. Some seven points are made. They must be emphasized in detail.

First of all, there are two general points, which in turn are followed by five strictly technical observations. After the preliminary statement that the wonderful is admitted in tragedy and epos, the general nature of wonder is defined as that which relies for its chief effects upon the irrational. Further than this analysis of the major element Aristotle does not carry us; but this simple statement, conveyed in a subordinate clause, is one which the moral doctors in their haste refused duly to express as the first step in a proper criticism of the subject. The fragmentary character of the essay is well shown by this rough and incomplete analysis of *τὸ θαυμαστόν*.—Another general remark is that which notes the universality both of the pleasure in the wonderful and also of its practice by the *raconteur*. This observation, taken with the previous generalization, constitutes what is practically a hint toward the psychology of wonder; and in spite of the commonplace character of the two points, they yet present to the weary searcher for a definite and correlated criticism a great promise. There is here a recognition of wonder as a thing omnipresent in life and story-telling, and an admission of it to a criticism based upon the naturalness of that fact, instead of an exclusion founded upon a moral preconception, or upon a permission, like that of Plato's, which is grounded in a political, non-literary economy. The air of free fact and open-eyed observation is refreshing after the theological dust, even though the manner is dryly scientific.

Of strictly technical points, the first in order of the paragraph is the differentiation of the use of wonder (or at least of the irrational, which seems to amount to the same thing) in the two literary kinds, tragedy and epos. Here is something entirely

new! The differentiation is psychological, as it should be. In epic poetry there is wider scope for the irrational because the epos, by presenting only words and associated images to the ear and eye, falls short of the more uncompromising vividness and reality of tragedy, which presents its scenes in actual, concrete forms. In the epic "the person acting is not seen"; therefore, many a minor absurdity, which would become glaringly apparent in the more realistic presentation of the stage, escapes the notice of the reader of the epic tale.

"Segnius irritant animos demissa per aërem,

"Quam quae sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus, et quae

"Ipse sibi tradit spectator." <sup>87</sup>

But it is Homer who most of all has led the way in skilful epic lying. This historical hint, so perfectly free from a puritanical cast, so urbanely recognizing the nature of art, is immediately succeeded by an attempt to grasp the master's secret for successful mendacity. The vicious circle which Aristotle adduces is one that Mrs. Radcliffe was over-fond of caricaturing in the superstitions of her menial characters.<sup>88</sup> In its serious application lies the secret of the *πρώτον ψεύδος*,—that first assumption in fiction from which, once allowed, all other impossibilities in the tale flow so naturally as in turn to produce an illusion of truth in the first falsehood. Twining cites the observation of Hobbes that "probable fiction is similar to reasoning rightly from a false principle." The enunciation of this cardinal principle concerning the nature of fiction and the use of the wonderful, drawn as it is from psychological observation and actual practice, runs close to the heart of the matter.

From the above follows the next technical principle,—a rule for the guidance of the poet, and the delimitation of the field

<sup>87</sup> *Ars Poetica*, ll. 180-183.

<sup>88</sup> "But they do say," cries Annette, "that something has been seen, in the dead of night, standing beside the great cannon, as if to guard it."

"Well! my good Annette," replies the heroine, "the people who tell such stories are happy in having you for an auditor, for I perceive you believe them all."

"Dear ma'amselle! I will show you the very cannon; you can see it from these windows!"

"Well . . . but that does not prove that an apparition guards it."

"What! not if I show you the very cannon! Dear ma'am, you will believe nothing."—*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Chap. XIX.

of the irrational in tragedy. To the famous epigram *προαιρέισθαί τε δεῖ ἀδύνατα εἰκότα μᾶλλον ἢ δυνατὰ ἀπίθανα* ("the poet should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities," as Butcher neatly translates), which Aristotle by repetition brings into chief importance among his observations on fiction, no added emphasis is necessary. It is the first and strongest enunciation of one of the cardinal points in the theory and practice of fiction. The limitation of the irrational to space without the plot is another example of Aristotle's differentiation of the use of the fictitious according to the literary kind involved, a distinction which many a later critic has unpardonably forgotten. It is in itself a further proof of Aristotle's habit of generalization from empirical observation, and of his avoidance of vapid and irresponsible theorizing.

The last observation of technique recalls the 'Charis Doctrine' of Pindar:<sup>89</sup> the absurdity is so veiled in poetic beauty that the sense of the former is lost in the appreciation of the latter. This is the aesthetic point of view *par excellence*; and Aristotle comes a step nearer than Pindar to admitting that the beauty of the thing legitimizes its impossibility. There is here no solemn warning that "the days that follow are the wisest witnesses,"—only a slight slur in the "we must accept it." Aristotle, for all his science and experimenting, was a truer lover of Homer than his more imaginative teacher.

To these criticisms of the wonderful and irrational contained in the twenty-fourth chapter, one important notice from the twenty-fifth must now briefly be added. Among the justifications of fiction, as we saw, was the matter of popular belief and tradition, the *ἀλλ' οὖν φασι* ('thus-men-say') doctrine, as conveniently enough it may be called. It was under this justification that Aristotle placed the supernatural. "This applies to tales about the gods. It may well be that these stories are not higher than fact nor yet true to fact: they are, very possibly, what Xenophanes says of them. But anyhow, 'this is what is said,'"<sup>90</sup> If there is a sufficient body of belief for the matter, let it pass! This apology for myth, coupled as it is with

<sup>89</sup> See above, p. 18.

<sup>90</sup> *Poetics* XXV, 7.—Butcher, p. 101.

the name of Xenophanes, who carries us back to the old philosophical objection, brightly signalizes at the close of our account of Aristotle that philosopher's impartiality and penetration, of which we spoke in the beginning of this section.<sup>91</sup> Though inclined to approve the anthropomorphic charge of the great Eleatic, the greater Stagirite is not blind to the propriety of the god-stories from a literary point of view: in the course of his masterly, quite empirical, and strictly technical inquiry into the place of the wonderful in poetry and the proper conditions of its employment, he has not neglected to put in their proper position, under the account of fiction, τὰ περὶ θεῶν,—the tales about the gods! This is perhaps the crowning truth, and most valuable disillusionment of old preconceptions, contributed by Aristotle to the new literary criticism of the wonderful begun by him. From the old philosophical criticism, from the ethial and educational prepossessions, has grown at last a literary theory, which properly and inevitably includes a special theory of fiction and the fabulous,—the two last, however, still somewhat confused in a multiplicity of terms (θαυμαστόν, ἄλογα, ἀδύνατα, ἀπίθανα).

The new critical theory was carried forward in most disappointing fashion by the various schools of philosophy and rhetoric. In nothing is their work more disappointing than in the matter of fiction. But it is to be remembered that there was no straw wherewith to make bricks. "The whole of Greek Poetic," says Professor Saintsbury, "was prejudicially affected—and the affection has continued to be a source of evil in all criticism since—by the accidental lateness of prose fiction in Greek literature."<sup>92</sup> Without a definite body of fiction to stimulate the theory of fiction it was not to be expected that the latter would make any great strides. The three centuries between Aristotle and Dionysius of Halicarnassus are bare enough of critical texts of any kind, while for our purposes even the work of the industrious Dionysius offers but a passing interest. In the sixth chapter of the *De Thucydide* occurs a notice interesting for its bearing upon the relation of history to fiction. Between history and poetry there had been, as Pro-

<sup>91</sup> See above, pp. 101-102.

<sup>92</sup> *Hist. Crit.* I, 192.



fessor Butcher observes, no feud at first, as between poetry and philosophy.<sup>93</sup> Homer, to the Greeks, was the minute historian of the Trojan war. The Pre-Socratics have left no hint of a quarrel in this matter. Even Plato, in a matter of history, is ready to praise Homer as speaking the words of God and nature.<sup>94</sup> "Aristotle himself speaks of the myths as history; the incidents they narrate are facts (τὰ γενόμενα); the names of their heroes are 'historical' (γενόμενα ὀνόματα) as opposed to fictitious (πεποιημένα) names."<sup>95</sup> Yet he was also able to point out the difference between historical and poetic truth.<sup>96</sup> With the rise of historical prose that distinction naturally grew; it was the distinction between history and fiction. And now, three hundred years later, Dionysius cries out fiercely against the admission of marvellous fictions into serious history. The Halicarnassian says that Thucydides excels the superior historians in two respects,—first, in his arrangement of material; "altera," (I give the Latin translation) "quod fabulosum in suos libros nihil induxit, neque in eam partem deflexit, ut multitudini fraudem et tanquam imposturam faceret. quo in genere superiores omnes peccauerant; qui Lamias commemorarunt nescio quas in siluis et saltibus, e terra prodeuntes; et Naïdas in terra atque aqua pariter degentes ab inferis profectas, pelago innatantes, semiferas, cum hominibus coëuntes, et ex mortali diuinoque concubitu semideam sobolem, et alia quaedam, quae nostra aetas, ut incredibilia planeque delira, contemnat."<sup>97</sup> The discussion is carried on in the two following chapters. In the seventh the author notices how the false creeps into history through the successive repetitions of verbal tradition. The Introduction to the *Antiquitates* contains other matter regarding his idea of history. But the above quotation is sufficient to bring to our attention that other source of hostile criticism of fiction—the historical conscience—the growth of which is usually one of the earliest testimonies to the differentiation of a prose fiction from historical narrative.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>93</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 401.

<sup>94</sup> *Laws* III, 680-682.

<sup>95</sup> Butcher, p. 402 (*Poetics* IX, 6-7).

<sup>96</sup> See above, p. 102.

<sup>97</sup> *Dionys. of Hal.*, ed. I. I. Reiske, Leipzig 1777, *De Thucyd.*, § VI.

<sup>98</sup> Compare, e.g., the reception of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Britons*. See Morley's *English Writers*, 3d. ed., III. 47.

In the first century after Christ, Plutarch and Longinus are the great names for our purpose. The work *De Elocutione* (περὶ ἐμπνεύσεως), which goes under the name of Demetrius Phalereus, and may have been of the first century before Christ or the first century after,<sup>99</sup> offers nothing beyond a faint recognition of the rhetorical use of the wonderfully exaggerated in elimax,<sup>100</sup> of the impossible in the field of variety and charm (the Charis Doctrine<sup>101</sup>), and of the fable when appositely introduced.<sup>102</sup> Plutarch, more talkative, often wandered toward the strange and prodigious. Julian<sup>103</sup> mentions the *Mythical Tales* of Plutarch, which are now lost. Evidently the amiable moralist could inveigh against superstition<sup>104</sup> while penning the romance of Theseus,<sup>105</sup> or the frequent asides of the fabulous found in the *Questions*.<sup>106</sup> But his criticism of the use of the wonderful in literature is found in the famous essay on *How a Young Man Ought to Hear Poems*.<sup>107</sup>

In this paper, Plutarch, while adopting the old moral view of the dangers of poetry, and warning youth against the pitfalls of fiction and fable in the poets, at the same time is more inclined to speak of dangers than of positive iniquities, and even goes so far as to elaborate something of a philosophy of fiction. In his attempt to show how a young person must view and understand the poets there is almost a defense of the fabulous in literature. There are, he says, two sources of fiction in poetry: there are poets who lie willingly, and others who lie unwillingly. "They do it with their wills, because they find strict truth too rigid to comply with that sweetness and gracefulness of expression, which most are taken with, so readily as fiction doth." Fiction can always avoid distasteful truth by substituting pleasing make-believe; and not even the devices of rhetoric, diction, and the

<sup>99</sup> *Demetrius on Style*, ed. W. R. Roberts, Cambridge 1902; see pp. 49-64 for discussion of date and authorship.

<sup>100</sup> *Ib.*, § 52, p. 97.

<sup>101</sup> *Ib.*, §§ 124-127, pp. 129-131.

<sup>102</sup> *Ib.*, §§ 157, 158, pp. 145-147.

<sup>103</sup> Julian, *Ag. the Cynic Heraclius*, 227A.

<sup>104</sup> *Morals, Socrates' Dæmon*, § 9.

<sup>105</sup> *Lives*.

<sup>106</sup> *E.g., Roman Questions*, Nos. 5, 21.

<sup>107</sup> Goodwin's ed. of the *Morals*, Boston 1883.

like, can compare with it in giving elegance and grace to a composition. "In poems we are more apt to be smitten and fall in love with a probable fiction than with the greatest accuracy that can be observed in measures and phrases, where there is nothing fabulous or fictitious joined with it." To him, as to other Greek critics, fiction and poetry are almost synonymous terms. "For though we have known some sacrifices performed without pipes and dances, yet we own no poetry which is utterly destitute of fable and fiction." The verses of the philosophers are accounted speeches which have "borrowed from poetry the chariot of verse." In a word, "the witchcraft of poetry consists in fiction." But wherever there occurs anything absurd about the gods or virtue, the youth who knows this nature of poetry will not have his belief unduly affected. When he meets with any such marvellous story as that of "Neptune's rending the earth to pieces and discovering the infernal regions, he will be able to check his fears of the reality of any such accident."<sup>108</sup>

Unwilling fictions, Plutarch would have it, are those which "express the judgment and belief of poets who thereby discover and suggest to us the ignorant or mistaken apprehensions they had of the Deities." Often they put upon these erroneous beliefs fictitious colors to recommend them to their fellows. But "almost everyone knows nowadays that the portentous fancies and contrivances of stories concerning the state of the dead are accommodated to popular apprehensions,—that the spectres and phantasms of burning rivers and horrid regions and terrible tortures expressed by frightful names are all mixed with fable and fiction, as poison with food." Here, again, the youth is comforted by the knowledge that it is not the nature of poetry to search out exact truth, and that touching such things as these it is after all impossible to know anything at all for a certainty.<sup>109</sup>

It will be noticed that Plutarch is less kindly disposed toward this second kind of fiction. But in both cases, and this is the great point to be observed, the author solves the moral difficulty not by a censorship, such as Plato would have established, but by going to poetry itself and discovering there that

<sup>108</sup> *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 45-47 (§ 2).

<sup>109</sup> *Ib.*, pp. 47-49 (§ 2).

the nature and purposes of literary truth (though he does not name the principle as Aristotle did) are different from those of moral veracity. Here, indeed, is a philosophy of fiction. Probability, as he observes,<sup>110</sup> is the nature of poetic truth; and to this remark, which is almost a statement of the psychological basis of fiction, is added<sup>111</sup> a discussion of the imitative nature of poetry, from which the nature and usage of fiction are deduced. The force of imitation, he says, lies in probability; hence poetic fiction does not, so far as it presents what in view of the facts of human nature is probable, depart altogether from truth.<sup>112</sup> As regards the purpose of poetic truth, there is the clear statement at the outset that strict truth is "too rigid to comply with that sweetness and gracefulness of expression which most are taken with." For beauty and grace, for the purpose of Pindar's 'Charis,' for variety and multiplicity of contrivance wherewith "poetry, waiving the truth of things, does most labor to beautify its fictions,"<sup>113</sup>—for these appeals to sense and imagination, does poetry adorn itself in fiction. "Variety bestows upon fable all that is pathetical, unusual, and surprising, and thereby makes it more taking and graceful; whereas what is void of variety is unsuitable to the nature of fable, and so raiseth no passions at all."<sup>114</sup> But he has put all this in one most informing phrase—for our search, a phrase immortal, side by side with Pindar's *χάρης*—"the witchcraft of poetry consists in fiction."

Thus, with a professed disapproval of the allegorical method of solving the moral problem of fiction, and by confessedly going to the poets themselves for their own interpretation,<sup>115</sup> Plutarch, though an inveterate moralist, took much the same step as the scientist Aristotle; and he went even further than the Stagirite in carefully and explicitly linking the principle of fiction to that of imitation through probability, and indicating more

<sup>110</sup> See above, p. 111.

<sup>111</sup> §§ 3 ff.

<sup>112</sup> *Ib.*, p. 66, § 7.

<sup>113</sup> *Ib.*, p. 66, § 7.

<sup>114</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ib.*, § 4. It must be admitted, however, that in this searching of the poets for their own interpretations he lays himself open in § 4 to the charge of making "a peck o' thy own words out o' a pint o' the Bible's."

clearly the aesthetic function of variety subserved by the fable. But he made no advance in the matter of definitely separating the ordinary fiction of artistic narration from that particular and stranger aspect of the thing called marvellous. His examples include what is distinctly wonderful and portentous, as may be seen from the quotations above;<sup>116</sup> they also include, side by side with these, fictions of the lesser, more ordinary kind. The whole burden of the discourse, however, points rather toward the former than the latter,—rather toward the exaggeration that surprises, than toward the minor verisimilitude, the complete illusion of which leaves us undisturbed.

The *De Sublimitate*<sup>117</sup> offers two testimonies toward the criticism of the marvellous. First, it carries on the discussion, already observed in Demetrius,<sup>118</sup> of the use of wonderful exaggeration to heighten the effect of sublimity and climax. Examples of such sublimity are quoted from Homer; their effect is said to be overpowering. Yet, in the next breath, the old moral view stalks across the stage. "But although all these things are awe-inspiring, yet from another point of view, if they be not taken allegorically, they are altogether impious, and violate our sense of what is fitting."<sup>119</sup> In spite of this umbraticality, however, the author has the penetration to point out that in the case of marvels the poet must be granted greater license than the orator. In recommending the use of images to gain sublimity, it is held that the image (*φαντασία*) has one purpose with the orators (that of vivid description, *ἐνάργεια*), another with the poets (that of enthrallment, *ἐκπληξίς*).<sup>120</sup> The poets have a tendency to fabulous exaggeration, and they transcend the credible at all points. In oratory the image should always have reality and truth.<sup>121</sup>

This distinction between poetical and oratorical imagery, with its allowance to the former of something of marvellous

<sup>116</sup> See above, p. 111.

<sup>117</sup> Ed., W. R. Roberts, Cambridge 1899. For date, see p. 16; authorship, pp. 1 ff.

<sup>118</sup> See above, p. 110.

<sup>119</sup> *Op. cit.*, § IX, 6, 7.

<sup>120</sup> *Ib.*, § XV, 2.

<sup>121</sup> *Ib.*, § XV, 7, 8.

exaggeration, though given with an air of some doubt, as Professor Saintsbury remarks,<sup>122</sup> is nevertheless a valuable contribution to the theory of the wonderful. It is also to be noted that this is a distinction based on empirical evidence,—not upon philosophical generalization.

The second testimony of the *De Sublimitate* is contained in the famous comparison of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>123</sup> This is the general proposition: the use of marvellous tales in literature is the sign of a declining genius. The *Odyssey* suggests this observation. The special token of Homer's old age and declining powers is held to be a love of marvellous tales (*τὸ φιλόμυθον*). "You seem to see [in the *Odyssey*] the ebb and flow of greatness, and a fancy roving in the fabulous and incredible, as though the ocean were withdrawing into itself and was being laid bare within its own confines. (14) In saying this I have not forgotten the tempests in the *Odyssey* and the story of the Cyclops and the like. If I speak of old age, it is nevertheless the old age of Homer. The fabulous element (*τὸ μυθικόν*), however, prevails throughout this poem over the real. The object of this digression has been, as I said, to show how easily great natures in their decline are sometimes diverted into absurdity, as in the incident of the wine-skin and of the men who were fed like swine by Circe . . . , and of Zeus like a nestling nurtured by the doves, and of the hero who was without food for ten days upon the wreck, and of the incredible tale of the slaying of the suitors. For what else can we term these things than veritable dreams of Zeus?"<sup>124</sup> Here, indeed, our wonder is that the hardships of the hero and the slaying of the suitors should be thought absurd. We, few of us, are yet so sophisticated as to perceive absurdity behind these marvels. The author's condemnation is, of a truth, sweeping enough. Childishness! That is the judgment offered by the reputed Longinus when the question is one of the employment of marvels in literature. We shall find the criticism repeated seventeen hundred years later.

<sup>122</sup> *Hist. Crit.*, I, 166.

<sup>123</sup> *Op. cit.*, § IX, 11-15.

<sup>124</sup> Tr. Roberts, pp. 66-69.

The remaining notices of Greek criticism of the marvellous are of little importance, and should be discussed briefly. The two great names after Aristotle—Plutarch and Longinus—are succeeded by a roster to which belong hardly any other than the names of minor show-rhetoricians, from Dion Chrysostom of Plutarch's own century, to Julian in the fourth; under Byzantine criticism Professor Saintsbury in his *History of Criticism* mentions only three Greek names,—Photius of the ninth, Tzetzes of the twelfth, and John of Sicily of the thirteenth century. Several of the recurrent subjects upon which these critics exercised their ingenuities, and which touch the subject of the marvellous more or less indirectly, may be mentioned. Of direct contribution to the subject there is practically nothing.

The old quarrel between Plato and the Poets is not lost to sight. Maximus Tyrius<sup>125</sup> discusses "Whether Plato was right in banishing Homer from his Republic?", and endeavors to harmonize poetry and philosophy. Sextus Empiricus, the philosopher, maintains that the sayings of the poets are harmful, useless, or of but little use.<sup>126</sup>

The interpretation of myth and mythic elements by rationalization and allegory continues. Dion Chrysostom accounts for the artists' representation of the sun and moon in human form by attributing to those bodies an intelligence which the artist can adequately represent only by foregoing realistic *μίμῃσις* and symbolizing them, instead, in human form. This symbolism, he says, is far above that of the crude barbarians who see the gods in the form of animals.<sup>127</sup> Maximus Tyrius recommends the allegorical interpretation of the poets. In the matter of the fictitious nature of poetry the same writer says that poetry is "based on fictions as to its arguments."<sup>128</sup>

Philostratus cannot away with Homer's *ἀπίθανα*. He remarks that for heroes to be *δεκαπήχεις* is pleasant enough in mythology.

<sup>125</sup> Ed., Reiske, 2 vols., Leipzig 1774. I have not been able to gain access to the books, and have relied on Professor Saintsbury's information (*Hist. Crit.* I, 117).

<sup>126</sup> Ed., Fabricius, Leipzig 1840, Vol. II, pp. 114, 115 (*Adversus Grammaticos*, Lib. I, Cap. XIII, §§ 292-296).

<sup>127</sup> *Dion Chrysostom*, ed., J. De Armin, Berlin 1893, Disc. xii (Ὀλυμπικός), §§ 56 ff. (Vol. I, 171 ff.).

<sup>128</sup> *Hist. Crit.*, I, 117.

but as a matter of fact unbelievable. This hint of two possible points of view is followed by a long *jeu d'esprit* on the evidences of giants,—an excuse for a collection of marvellous tales.<sup>129</sup> Sextus Empiricus flatly declares that poetry is absolutely useless so long as it deals in *ξέναις ἱστορίαις*.<sup>130</sup>

But the mass of discussion among these rhetoricians, so far as the wonderful is concerned, is taken up with the discussion of the orator's use of the fable (*μῦθος*). All the *Progymnasmata* ('Composition-Books,' as Professor Saintsbury calls them<sup>131</sup>) discuss the proper use of the Aesop-like fable for rhetorical illustration and variety; and the discussions become as tiresome and useless for our purposes, as do the other divigations of the rhetoricians for the student of general literary criticism. This minor type of the fable, a *rhetorical type* of fiction, and, in one sense, of the marvellous, was already centuries old. Aristotle discusses fables as a division of proof by examples, and cites as illustrations Stesichorus on Phalaris, and Aesop at Samos. He remarks that fables are suited to popular oratory,—an echo of the disesteem in which the wonder-tales were held by the cultured.<sup>132</sup> Demetrius, as we have already observed, recommended the piquant use of fables.

Turning to Walz<sup>133</sup> we find the rhetoricians differentiating *μῦθος* and *διήγημα*. *Mûthos* for the orator is a short story, false (*ψευδής*), but probable (*πίθανος*). Πῶς δ' ἂν γένοιτο πιθανός; \**Ἄν τὰ προσήκοντα πράγματα τοῖς προσώποις ἀποδιδῶμεν* (Hermogenes, *Cap.* I). The *διήγημα*, on the other hand, must be *ἔκθεσιν πράγματος γεγονότος, ἢ ὡς γεγονότος* (Hermog. *Cap.* 2). The fable is used by the orator to illustrate and drive home his point, but *ὁ μῦθος ποιητῶν μὲν προῆλθε* (Aphthonius I); and was used by the ancients, as *e.g.*, by Hesiod *τὸν τῆς ἀηδόνας εἰπὼν* (*Εργ.* 201) — (Hermog. I and Theon. III). Thus, a relation is suggested between the fable of the orator and the allegorical use of myths by the poets. The *μῦθος* is called Sybaritean,

<sup>129</sup> Philostratus, ed., Kayser (*Teubner*). *Heroic Dialogues*. §§ 667, 668.

<sup>130</sup> *Op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*, § 278.

<sup>131</sup> *Hist. Crit.*, I, 96.

<sup>132</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* II, 20 (tr., Welldon, p. 182).

<sup>133</sup> Walz, *Rhetores Graeci*, Stuttgart, etc. 1832.



Cilician, or Cyprian, according to its origin; but to Aesop most are attributed (Hermog. I). It is of three kinds and uses: τὸ μὲν ἐστὶ λογικόν, τὸ δὲ ἠθικόν, τὸ δὲ μικτόν (Aphthonius I). Examples for the orator's use are conveniently appended.

All this is at any rate an acknowledgment, a recommendation, of a literary, distinctly rhetorical (in the ancient sense of the term) use of fiction, and, by the way, of the marvellous. The fables given as examples contain elements of wonder. Here was the evolution, at an early time and long continuing, of a distinct and technical type of marvellous narrative; and, what is most noteworthy, it was a development within *prose* composition,—a sort of incidental, illustrative use of prose fiction. With it there went a critical theory,—something that did not accompany the geographical romances of Plato, Euhemerus, and Diodorus,<sup>134</sup> or the fictions of Philostratus.<sup>135</sup>

Julian (c. 331-363 A.D.) undertakes, in the oration against the Cynic Heraclius,<sup>136</sup> to trace the genealogy of the fables, but supposes that they, like the other kinds of art, were invented by the people among whom they are found (§ 2). These fables were adapted to the child-like intelligence of earlier generations; but the poets added the apologue (ὁ αἶνος), which differs from the fable in that while the latter is addressed to children, the former is intended for men,—for their enlightenment as well as for their pleasure (§ 3). The Oration continues, in a fashion equally unprofitable for us, with a discussion of the place of mythography with reference to morality and theology, the kinds of mystery-fables and their comparison, the pedagogy of Plutarch in the matter, and concludes (§§ 17 ff.) with an example of the fable. The whole discussion is religious rather than literary, and is all under the neo-platonic view. It serves as a type of the rhetorical and mystical discussion of fable, but contributes nothing to the theory of fiction or wonder.

Of the three Byzantines noted by Professor Saintsbury, the testimonies are equally without value. The *Bibliotheca* of

<sup>134</sup> See Chassang, *Histoire du Roman*, Part 2, Ch. IV.

<sup>135</sup> See Chassang, *Appollonius de Tyane*, Paris 1862.

<sup>136</sup> *Empereur Julien, Œuvres Complètes*, tr., E. Talbot, Paris 1863. Text ed., Hertlein (*Teubner*).

Photius<sup>137</sup> includes notices of quite a number of works of fiction, or collections of wonderful tales, but the comment upon them is without significance.<sup>138</sup> Tzetzes and John of Sicily offer nothing.

The gist of Greek criticism of fiction and the marvellous has now been presented: the present chapter may be brought to its conclusion by a brief summary of the more general results of the inquiry. The mere mentioning of the following points will be enough to indicate their derivation from the facts already presented, and their bearing upon the problem of the marvellous.

(1) Greek criticism of the marvellous is for the most part an undifferentiated element in Greek criticism of the fictitious in the poets. In most of this criticism there seems to be little or no change of emphasis when the illustrations pass from the minor aspects of fiction to the decidedly marvellous. Both are criticized in like fashion in the same breath. In some cases, however, notably in Aristotle and Plutarch, the primary reference seems to be to the distinctly prodigious.

(2) Greek criticism of the fictitious arises through a criticism of Greek mythology. This myth-criticism begins with a moral expostulation with the impieties and improprieties of many of the marvellous details of the god-stories, extends to a moral attack upon the fiction of mythology and of the poets in general, and is given something of an economic aspect by Plato, who is also the chief supporter of its ethical character. This criticism is delivered by the philosophers, historians, and, in less degree, by some of the poets themselves.

(3) Various solutions are offered of the difficulties and per-

<sup>137</sup> Photius, Migne, *Patrologia Græca*, Vols. 3, 4 (103, 104).

<sup>138</sup> Vol. 3, Col. 414, 475. Photius attributes a certain school of fiction (Iamblichus, Achilles Tatius, Heliodorus, and Damascius) to Lucian and Lucius. In Col. 478 is his opinion of the school. His notice (Col. 413) of ΔΑΜΑΣΚΙΟΥ ΠΕΡΙ ΠΑΡΑΔΟΞΩΝ ΛΟΓΟΙ (consisting of four books, one each on the following subjects,—of incredible fictions, of incredible stories about demons, of incredible tales of souls appearing after death, of incredible things of nature) introduces to our notice a work which had many companions in antiquity. Several of these, collections of marvellous anecdotes, have been edited by A. Westermann, *Paradoxographoi*, Brunswick 1839. The most famous of them all is Pseudo-Aristotelian ΠΕΡΙ ΘΑΥΜΑΣΙΩΝ ΑΚΟΤΕΜΑΤΩΝ, ed. Beckmann, Göttingen 1786. Cf. with these the *Mythographoi Græci*, ed. Westerman, Brunswick 1843.

plexities raised by the impious and fictitious (marvellous) elements in mythology. Rationalization, allegory, euhemerism, are broached; they are all philosophical and do not recognize the problem in any other light than that of philosophy and religion.

(4) Inasmuch as the moral criticism and the philosophical solutions are necessarily based upon Homer and Hesiod, these poets themselves, and, by analogy, all poets, are censured and censored. Thus, a criticism of poetry, that is to say, literary criticism itself, begins to develop out of the ethical criticism of marvel and fiction. But so long as the ethical preoccupation continues literary criticism does not realize its own separate ends.

(5) At last, with Aristotle, a real literary criticism develops, which is divorced from moral philosophy. This new criticism, in turn, attacks the problem of fiction, and especially the marvellous in fiction, as a purely literary problem. An aesthetic has succeeded the ethical outlook. Thus is developed the theory of poetic truth, under which the marvellous assumes its proper place.

(6) The successors of Aristotle mix the real literary criticism he established with the older moral expostulation and interpretation. Plutarch is the most important name after Aristotle.

(7) Throughout the course of critical commentary run certain minor doctrines, as they have been called, which gather force by repetition. Such are the 'Charis-doctrine' (Pindar, Aristotle, Demetrius (*De Elocutio*), Plutarch, etc.); and the doctrine of sublimity and climax, closely related to, if not identical with, the 'Charis-doctrine' (Demetrius, Longinus). Both these doctrines, by justifying the use of the marvellous for the literary purposes of beauty and force, contribute to the aesthetic liberation of the wonderful.

(8) Finally, it may be remarked that these facts concerning the development of a literary criticism of the marvellous, illustrate at the same time a stage in the history of the marvellous. To describe that stage would be to repeat the details of the rise of that new Greek consciousness by which the marvels of a believed religion passed through the transitional epoch of ethical distrust and criticism, to the condition of accepted aesthetic illusion. Literature then inherited the marvellous a second time, —not, as at first, from religious faith, but from an aesthetic reconciliation of fact and fiction.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WONDER.

Inadequacy of previous descriptions of wonder—States allied to wonder: (1) surprise, astonishment, and curiosity; (a) surprise differentiated logically, as in sudden and unusual experiences; (b) surprise differentiated physiologically, as in short and long “*eireuits*”; (c) passing of surprise [through astonishment, at times] to curiosity and wonder; (d) relations of curiosity, explanation, and wonder; (e) six typical cases; (f) differentiation of the improbable and the impossible, and their relations to wonder and marvel and to the six typical cases; (g) the marvellous: (2) belief and wonder; (a) definition; (b) degree of belief consonant with wonder; (c) the ridiculous; (d) belief and the standard of ideal possibility: (3) imagination and the marvellous: (4) fear and marvel: (5) pleasure and marvel.—Summary.

In spite of the large part that wonder has played in the history of ideas, especially in the realm of religious thought and belief, and although its genetic relation to reflection and philosophy was a truism in the days of Plato<sup>1</sup> and Aristotle,<sup>2</sup> its serious investigation has hardly reached beyond the descriptive stage in which Descartes left it in his *Traité des Passions*.<sup>3</sup> Bain is only a little fuller in his description than Descartes. “Surprise and wonder,” he says, “are due to the clash of opposing states; the intrusion of something extraordinary or unfamiliar, through which is incurred a shock that may be con-

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, § 155.—“For wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and philosophy *begins* in wonder.”

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 2, 9 (Bekker).

<sup>3</sup> Art. LIII, L'admiration:—Lorsque la première rencontre de quelque objet nous surprend, et que nous le jugeons être nouveau, ou fort différent de ce que nous connaissions auparavant, ou bien de ce que nous supposions qu'il devait être, cela fait que nous l'admirons et en sommes étonnés; et pour ce que cela peut arriver avant que nous connaissions aucunement si cet objet nous est convenable ou s'il ne l'est pas, il me semble que l'admiration est la première de toutes les passions: et elle n'a point de contraire, à cause que si l'objet que se présente n'a rien en soi qui nous surprenne, nous n'en sommes aucunement émus, et nous le considérons sans passion.

sidered as something beyond mere sensation.”<sup>4</sup> It is perhaps somewhat unfortunate that the intrusion of the unfamiliar object should be regarded as a state of mind in conflict with another pre-existing state; for one must ask where the strange state originated, whence it gathered its support and “fringe,” and if, when once constituted, it is not by itself the wonder or surprise. Moreover, why the extraordinary or unfamiliar image should be felt as an intrusion, and how it is so felt, are questions nicely glossed, or at any rate rendered all the more tantalizing by the vague phrase, “through which is incurred a shock that may be considered as something beyond mere sensation.” A little further on Bain recurs to the subject in connection with his definition of novelty. Novelty he explains as the superior force of stimuli at their first application.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, wonder, he avers, is founded on relativity, and involves more than simple novelty. While surprise is one degree beyond novelty as being a shock which is not only novel but also unexpected, involving contradiction and conflict, wonder, on the other hand, contains surprise with the new effect of contemplating something that rises above human experience and that elevates us to a feeling of superiority. Often, though, the object of contemplation may be something that falls decidedly beneath the ordinary.<sup>6</sup>—But we may easily question these dicta on novelty and surprise; and the relation between surprise and wonder seems too glibly stated.

The newer psychology, with its less essay-like character, is almost equally vague upon the subject of wonder. The simple character and early appearance of the emotion, hinted at by Descartes, are insisted upon by Wundt<sup>7</sup> and by Preyer.<sup>8</sup> Sully writes: “The intense craving for the wonderful, the love of the marvellous, has something of an intoxicating effect, and paralyzes the impulses of inquiry. But in its moderate degrees the emotion of wonder is the natural stimulus to further inquiry. *Wonder lives by isolating the new fact or circumstance*

<sup>4</sup> Bain, *The Emotions and the Will*, London 1875, p. 69.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*, p. 85.

<sup>7</sup> *Physiol. Psychol.*, II, 18, 332.

<sup>8</sup> *Die Seele des Kindes*, Leipzig 1890, pp. 108, 134.

from the familiar order of experience.”<sup>9</sup> Wonder, he further remarks, is a more complex affair than surprise, and implies comparison and recognition of contrast. “What is wholly new or unexpected always surprises us, but does not necessarily excite wonder.”<sup>10</sup> The notice continues with a few words upon the pleasurable aspect of wonder and also upon its relation to fear and admiration. In conclusion, its complex nature in reference to intellectual emotion is set forth: it involves fixing of attention at the stage of surprise, discrimination further on, may interfere with inquiry, but often is the starting point for discovery. As cap-stone to such a general and unsatisfactory account, Professor Dewey’s statement may well be quoted here. “It may come about that we grow so used to our customary environment that we feel wonder only when the shock of surprise strikes us, but the normal healthy attitude of the mind is wonder at all facts, familiar or novel, until it has mastered their meaning and made itself at home among them.”<sup>11</sup>

Professor James’ notice is equally vague, and even more meagre, though it does suggest, as another line of inquiry, the instinctive sensory susceptibility of animals to novel stimuli. “Already pretty low down among vertebrates,” he says, “we find that any object may excite attention provided it be only *novel*, and that attention may be followed by approach and exploration by nostril, lips, or touch.” (Intervene some remarks upon curiosity and fear as antagonistic principles in such exploration.) “Some such susceptibility for being excited and irritated by the mere novelty, as such, of any movable feature of the environment must form the instinctive basis of all human curiosity; though, of course, the superstructure absorbs contributions from so many other factors of the emotional life that the original root may be hard to find. With what is called scientific curiosity, and with metaphysical wonder, the practical instinctive root has probably nothing to do. The stimuli here are not objects, but ways of conceiving objects; and the emotions and actions they give rise to are to be classed, with many other

<sup>9</sup> Sully, *Outlines of Psychology*, London 1885, pp. 522, 523. The italics are mine. See below, p. 65.

<sup>10</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> J. Dewey, *Psychology*, 3d. ed., N. Y. 1899, p. 304.

aesthetic manifestations, sensitive and motor, as incidental features of our mental life.”<sup>12</sup> To this valuable suggestion—“ways of conceiving objects”—we shall recur below.<sup>13</sup>

Ribot’s<sup>14</sup> contribution to the subject is as suggestive as any and as sketchy as all. He starts with an “instinct, a tendency, a craving”—the “primitive craving for knowledge” (conserved by selection in the struggle for existence)—and finds its first stage of development to be surprise. Surprise is “a special emotional state which cannot be traced back to any other, consisting of a shock, a disadaptation, \* \* \* without contents, without object, save a relation.” From this first stage he differentiates wonder as a second. Surprise, he says, is momentary, a disadaptation, and is without objective material. Wonder, on the other hand, is stable, a readaptation, and possesses as its material some strange or unaccustomed object. It is the awakening of attention. The third stage is the interrogation, “What is it? What is the use of it?”, and consists in mental assimilation. Finally, thinks Ribot, the transition to the disinterested, non-utilitarian period is “*through the natural, innate inclination of the human intellect towards the extraordinary, the strange, the marvellous.*”<sup>15</sup>

In this account there is, to be sure, a suggestive analysis of the relations of surprise, wonder, and curiosity; and the term *disadaptation*, in spite of its linguistic awkwardness, is as convenient as it is illuminating. Wonder, however, and the wonderful, seem mixed in the suggestion of an instinct toward the marvellous; the subjective nature of wonder is confused with its objective reference.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the psychological genealogy of the marvellous is not given. He does not say that the descent is from innate curiosity through surprise, wonder, and interrogation; but simply adds a fourth stage of disinterested curiosity by postulating another innate, unnamed mental tendency toward the “extraordinary, the strange, the marvellous.” Surely, this is a loose statement. It may be that the author’s

<sup>12</sup> W. James, *Psychology*, II, 429.

<sup>13</sup> See below, *e.g.*, p. 66.

<sup>14</sup> Ribot, *Psychology of the Emotions*, London 1897, pp. 368-371.

<sup>15</sup> Italics are mine.

<sup>16</sup> See below, p. 69.

idea is that the love of the marvellous is disinterested curiosity: but even so he is forced to hedge on the word "disinterested";<sup>17</sup> and so we are no nearer a clear view of the matter. Even *impersonal interest* is a questionable phrase when applied to the interest in the marvellous; for the old utilitarian, struggle-for-existence curiosity must in its investigations often have been as unconscious of self-acceruing gains as is the curiosity of a modern chance visitor in mediumistic circles. Curiosity, indeed, is as often the vice of the idle as the virtue of the active,—a truism with us no more than with our proto-savages,—a fact with human beings no more than with other animals. Finally, in postulating this instinct toward the marvellous, Ribot gives us no hint as to its nature,—whether, *e.g.*, it be simple or complex. What, may be asked at once, is its relation to the impulse to exaggerate, or to the phenomena of belief or awe?<sup>18</sup>

The rather astonishing failure of the professed psychologists to explicate the important subject of wonder leaves the field open to original remark; and, in view of the present need of a clear and systematic view of the wonder state, it may not be presumptuous for a layman to hazard a few observations on his own responsibility.

That wonder, like joy and hope, care and anger, is not the name of a single process, but rather of a class, "in which a large number of single affective processes are grouped because of certain common characteristics,"<sup>19</sup> is a statement that invites conviction. Indeed, the complexity of the psychical processes in this case is undoubtedly the very fact that has daunted investigators; but the common experience of the state, its tremendous importance in the history of ideas and institutions, especially in those of a religious and literary nature, together with its affiliations with certain of the simplest and most ancient of human psychoses, might easily convert the timidity of empirical observation to the enthusiasm of a real hope of beginning the *éclaircissement* of a field of human phenomena that are as

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 371.

<sup>18</sup> For other mention of wonder see: A. T. Ormond, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, II, 820-21 (a definition concerned mostly with the religious aspect of wonder); G. T. Ladd, *Psychology*, 1894, pp. 540-541; G. Spiller, *The Mind of Man*, London 1902, p. 270.

<sup>19</sup> Wundt, *Outlines of Psychology*, Eng. tr., Leipzig 1902, § 13.



intense in interest as they have been important in development. The best approach to the matter will lie through an examination in detail of certain states closely allied to wonder; and through a decision, in the case of each such state, as to the nature of the alliance. For, on the one hand, any attempt more precise than this to draw up a typical state of wonder must be doomed to failure because of the uniqueness, in variation, of all particular states of wonder; while, on the other hand, the proposed approach will, by its many-sidedness and frequent perspective, naturally afford a series of checks and counter-checks for determining the presence or absence of wonder states. By contemplating the relations to wonder of surprise, curiosity, belief, imagination, fear, and pleasure, there may be gained from a purely descriptive beginning a suggestion for the analysis of complex wonder states into their elements, and also a hint of the physiological processes or conditions upon which their prevalence depends.

Long ago Descartes indicated the primitive and elemental character of surprise by placing it first in the order of the "Passions,"<sup>20</sup> though he confused surprise and wonder in the usual fashion. The presence of the state in animals, where it appears with all the air of simple and immediate motor reaction, at once establishes its nature as being far from complex.<sup>21</sup> What more simple, more immediate, than the startled movement of wild creatures, say a herd of deer, when surprised in their native haunts? Hit a drowsy dog with a well-aimed stone; the jump of surprise appears quite involuntary, almost a pure reflex. There are scarcely any other feelings, except the general ones of physiological pleasure and pain, that have to the same extent immediateness of response for their central character, and completeness of motor activity for their peripheral expression. So strong indeed is the latter characteristic that it persists even into those cases where the surprise has become chiefly significant as a distinctively mental phenomenon. The somatic reverberation of the *Eureka* of the staid scientist is a matter of humorous comment!

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<sup>20</sup> See above, p. 120, note 3.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Ribot, as cited above, p. 123, note 14.

But what is this thing called surprise? How is it called forth? It may be said to follow from the interruption of a physical or mental state, or both, by the sudden or by the unusual. If a loud explosion should break in upon me as I am writing these words, or if some one should noiselessly steal up behind me and close his hands over my eyes, the *suddenness* of either experience would engender a state of surprise. On the other hand, the German servant-girl would fall into a similar state if the Czar of all the Russias were to announce to her by crier, with due regard to mitigating the sudden nature of the news, the *unusual* circumstance that he was about to interrupt her ordinary duties with a morning visit. The novelty of such an intention would occasion a surprise only second to that which one might experience upon being set down in the land of Brobdignag. Or, to take an example that will combine both the sudden and the unusual, as in the majority of cases they are combined, who can look out now from the modern tavern-porch at the Grand Cañon of the Colorado without picturing the thrilling surprise of Cardenas and his Spaniards—when, as they advanced slowly over the mesas, suddenly, without the slightest hint of warning, they stood upon the brink of that endless, castellated chasm, doubly unusual, supremely unique, to the wondering eyes of those old *conquistadores* who for weeks had seen nothing but endless plain and mesa. In a word, it is the unlooked for, the unexpected, whether because of its suddenness or its unusualness, that, breaking in upon a state of consciousness not in train for its adaptation, occasions surprise. To use Ribot's ugly but convenient word, it is the *disadaptation* resulting from the unexpected that produces the feeling under consideration.

But there is more to observe upon a closer view. In the first class of the examples just given—*i.e.*, in the class that may be termed the “sudden”—the explosion, or the merry joker, afford stimuli that are simple, direct, and physical; and the surprise is easily described as the involuntary response to the physical shock. For such a reflex there needs no play of any save the lower of the central nervous ganglia. But in the second class of examples—the unusual—though there is still a physical

character to the stimulus, it is no longer a matter of simple and direct shock obtaining an immediate reflex from the lower centers. If the Governor of the State should visit me this morning, the mere sudden appearing of the man—that, is the mere sudden view of him physically—would be the least of the surprise, would quite possibly enter into it not at all; but the mental recognition of the new relation so established, of the unusualness of such a visit, would give almost the entire content of the surprise. This reflection upon a relation involves a course far other than the simple, direct course of the surprise occasioned by the explosion: the center now concerned is the chief ganglionic center of all, the cortex itself.<sup>22</sup> The action here is over an indirect and long circuit; and is exceedingly complex as compared with the short circuit of the explosion experience which, instead of rising to the hemispheres, passes from the sense-organ to some lower nerve-center and out to the muscles. The two processes are represented by Professor James' diagram of the two types of reaction.<sup>23</sup>

We have thus two general cases of surprise, differentiated by both logical and physiological means: the sudden type, involving the short circuit of reaction; and the unusual type, involving the long circuit of reaction and the cognition of novelty. It might be convenient to call the former 'physical surprise,' and the latter 'mental surprise.' Moreover, it may be noticed in passing, that mental surprise, as involving a concept, affords material for a wider expression, literary or otherwise, than the mere motor response or inarticulate cry of physical surprise.

A step further. In either case the shock is often so great as to produce an intense duration of surprise, or, stating it in terms of the organism, a state approximating temporary nervous paralysis. This may take place with, or without, the added ingredient of fear; and is generally denoted by the stronger term, astonishment: "struck dumb with astonishment" is the common phrase.<sup>24</sup> This must not, however, be confused with

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Sully, as quoted above, p. 54.

<sup>23</sup> W. James, *Psychology, Briefer Course*, p. 98.

<sup>24</sup> It might be well to insist here upon a differentiation of terms. 'Astonishment' might be limited to the nervous effects of this paralysis,—'amazement' to its mental effects.

wonder. Often it may be hard for the individual to differentiate the two,—to say when he passes from astonishment to wonder; yet the condition implied in the former is anything but wonder. It involves a complete cessation of all activity, a blankness of mind, and a statue-like rigidity of body, which preclude *per se* all possibility of any activity. On the other hand, wonder, though it lacks the vivid activity of definite reasoning, is by no means a complete cessation of mental activity. Uncertainty, not the paralysis of amazement, characterizes wonder. Johnson was not at pains to distinguish the two when in the *Rambler*<sup>25</sup> he described wonder as “a pause of reason, a sudden cessation of the mental progress”; and, again, as the “gloomy quiescence of astonishment.”

But the state of surprise, whether it passes into astonishment or not, is in either case too spasmodic to keep its character long. Activity and change are as characteristic of surprise as is immediateness of effect. The duration of any one state is limited. What state or states may succeed?

Consider first the sudden, or physical, case of surprise. If, after the shock, weak or severe, the mind is brought into operation, the surprise or astonishment passes somewhat insensibly, that is gradually, into a new state. Without such succession of mental activity the shock would entirely pass off in motor discharge,—die away in *diminuendo* of physical reverberation like the lessening waves of a tone vibration; *with* such activity of the mind, there supervenes upon the involuntary attention won by the shock a new state, the insignia of which are a tendency toward voluntary attention and the framing of the question, “What was it?” Where before the whole process was one of mere neural activity, of what has been called the short circuit, the new state means the establishment of the longer loop. The mind is endeavoring to assimilate the physical experience to its fund of similar experiences,—to relate it, to make adaptation succeed disadaptation.

Of two sorts, however, may be this attempt at adaptation. The mind may be ready with some answer or hypothesis whereby the explosion, to keep the former example, may be accounted

<sup>25</sup> *Rambler*, July 9, 1751.

for. The powder works have blown up again! Or cannon are saluting some officer of state! Perhaps it is the blasting for the new tunnel! The marshalling of these and similar reasons, the weighing of them in evidence, the passing from one to another and back again in search of the real cause, supplementing them by further inquiries, by telephoning and consulting newspapers,—all this is patently what is known as curiosity. But if, on the other hand, the mind is ready with no answer or hypothesis; or if, instead of definite hypotheses, only the vaguest of dim hints of possible causes flit ghost-like across the mind, and disappear irrevocably into dimmer shadows; or, finally, if the mind lacks sufficient evidence for determining which of its hypotheses is correct, and so remains puzzled and at a comparative standstill,—the condition is one of wonder: wonder as to what is the cause, or as to which of several probable causes is the real one. Similarly, in the example of the eyes being suddenly covered by the hands of one stealing up behind, whenever there is, or so long as there is, a possibility of discovering who the wag was, the curiosity of the victim is uppermost. But if, conceivably, there should occur no name of a probable perpetrator, or if one be at his wit's end to choose amongst many possible names, a state of wonder may be supposed to supervene. Moreover, it should be noted that in either case—though we cannot say in any case of wonder—yet in either of these cases, or in cases similarly constituted of sudden shock,—let the solution be once given, the wonder disappears immediately. It was another powder mill smashed up! Good, nothing strange there! Or it was blasting in the hills! Ah, so! And the wonder dwindles away. The only possible exception to this rule would be such as would cause immediately another condition of surprise, and that a condition of the second or “unusual” class. If, for instance, the reply were, “It was the falling over of Mt. So-and-so into the bay,” a new and greater state of surprise, consequent upon the unusualness of such a proceeding, would succeed the former.

Three cases, or degrees, of the unusual may be observed: first, what I shall call ‘mere rarity’; second, improbability; third, impossibility.

The unusual that is merely rare, and the unusual that is so

unusual, to speak colloquially, as to be improbable, are easily enough differentiated in concept. Particular examples are often apt to shade both ways. The visit of the Czar to Gretchen, for instance, might, with a slight stretch of judgment, be taken as an example of either case. But finding a land of giants is so much more improbable than the Czar's visit to Gretchen that beside it the visit seems only a case of rarity. For the purpose of the argument, it may be assumed that the Gretchen incident is an example of mere rarity. A captious reader may, in what follows, substitute for Gretchen the winning of a prize in the lottery, or, perhaps, the discovery of an honest alderman!

Suppose, then, that of a fine Sunday morning Gretchen is employing her motor activities in the ancient and honorable vocation of sweeping and dusting! The chances are, of course, ten to one that her surprise upon opening the door and hearing of the intended visit of the Russian autocrat will durate to a prolonged paralysis of the ordinary functioning of politeness. Even the actual appearance of the Emperor himself will hardly avail to break that spell of Teutonic immobility. But Gretchen is more than astonished: she is amazed. The unusualness of the visit has been recognized mentally; and the mental surprise has been so great as temporarily to arrest the comparing and assimilating functions of her mind. The states of wonder and curiosity will follow, as in the previous case of physical surprise, with this difference,—that, whereas in the former case the supervention of curiosity and wonder involved a switching on of the longer loop of reaction, here, on the other hand, the activity of mental surprise has already established that circuit. The indices of the succeeding states are still the same,—voluntary attention, in place of involuntary attention, and interrogation. As long as there is a hope of successfully answering the question, the state of curiosity may be said to endure; with bafflement, to coin a convenient word, wonder succeeds. It is not hard to picture Gretchen's excited review of possible causes for such an unheard-of visit, or her curious listening at key-holes and badgering of her betters, until, forcibly repressed, her sources of information shut off and her hypotheses wildly vertiginous, she relapses into either a second amazement or the gentler state of helpless wonder!

The inter-relations of the characteristic of mere rarity (which by a familiar trick of the mind attaches itself to the objective stimulus<sup>26</sup>), of the presence or absence in the mind of explanatory hypotheses, and of wonder, are somewhat complex. But the multitude of particular examples may be reduced, I think, to six typical cases.

1. *Where a seeming rarity ceases with the giving of the explanation.*—In this case wonder ceases immediately; and the subject, in discovering that the rarity was only a cheat of seeming, feels himself the victim of a trick.—Suppose, for example, that in the course of excavating for the foundations of a “sky-scraper” a laborer came across, many, many feet beneath the surface of the ground, a spherical, curiously marked object, which he at first took for a human skull, but which on closer examination proved to be merely a piece of rock. The wonder of the first moment would quickly vanish in something like amusement or disgust at the curio. On the other hand, any wonder at the curious similarity of the rock to a human head would resolve itself into Case 4, mentioned below.

2. *Where an actual rarity still remains after the explanation has been given.*—In this case wonder is retained, but with a gradually decreasing vividness.—Suppose, again, that the object found by the laborer really was a human skull, but that later<sup>27</sup> it was explained, upon investigation, that the skull was the fossilized remainder of a prehistoric man of the Bronze Age. Evidently the explanation leaves the object still a rarity, and the wonder experienced at the discovery of the rarity endures after the explanation. This duration of wonder, however, does not invalidate our original assumption of the relation between wonder and ignorance; for, true to the nature of that assumption, the wonder in this case is subject to a gradually decreasing vividness. That skull, placed on the laborer’s mantel-piece, would soon cease to be to the laborer himself the object of wonder it was at first. To understood rarity one becomes accustomed. Time and knowledge both weary the wonder.

<sup>26</sup> Compare above, p. 55.

<sup>27</sup> Often the explanation is given first, the rarity itself occurring later. Thus, one may have studied all there is to be known about volcanoes; yet his first sight of an actual eruption will cause him something more than surprise and other than curiosity.

3. *Where the rarity is lost, although no explanation is ascertained.*—Here the rarity is lost by the multiplication of similar objects. Wonder dies a speedy death under this circumstance.—If such skulls were found daily and in all parts of the city, or region, even though there were no sure explanation, they would soon cease to be regarded as wonderful.

4. *Where the rarity remains, and no explanation is given.*—In this case there is no multiplication of the objects of rarity; and the sense of wonder keeps only a precarious life because it is subject to the corroding effect of time.—For instance, one such skull might have been found and ignorantly guarded by the laborer against all publicity and chance of explanation. The wonder, then, would first rise, and later wane, describing a curve, as it were. At length a period would be reached when the wonder, while yet present at more and more infrequent intervals of special reflection, would be but pale or altogether absent for the greater part of the time.

5. *Where rarity is kept, but one or more hypotheses, indefinitely felt or definitely presented, are disregarded,* left unexplored,—the mind refusing to concentrate upon them because it prefers the idleness of wonder to the exertion of curiosity. Often—perhaps because of the natural inertia of the mind, or it may be because of what Ribot so vaguely calls the innate love of the marvellous—often the mind deliberately prefers the absence of explanation. To this case we shall return when speaking of the pathology of wonder.<sup>28</sup> For the present we need only suppose that the laborer was an imaginative, credulous fellow, much given to mysteries and miracles—perhaps a religious fanatic—who deliberately disregarded the explanation of his find as a fossil remain, and held it instead to be a saintly relic revealed to him for his particular and secret advantage. In a credulous community such an object might easily find its way into the sacred relics of the church.<sup>29</sup> Here, also, belong the

<sup>28</sup> The pathology of wonder will be discussed in another paper.

<sup>29</sup> Compare Johnson's excoriation of the ignorant and lazy intellect which prefers the ease of wonder to the labor of reason: "What they cannot immediately conceive, they consider as too high to be reached, or too extensive to be comprehended; they therefore content themselves with the gaze of folly, forbear to attempt what they have no hope of performing, and resign the pleasure of rational contemplation to more pertinacious study or more active faculties."—*The Rambler*, July 9, 1751.



“wonder, and no end of wondering” that the ignorant, superstitious mind experiences when it attributes some rarity in experience “to ghost, to witch, to fairy, or to fiend.” Experiences of the sort are, of course, multiplied and magnified in the telling; and so they soon progress into absolute impossibilities, and travel out of the realm of experiential rarity and wonder into that of ‘literary’ marvel. Dr. Beattie, speaking of second sight among the Highlanders, quotes the following poem, with the remark that “what in history or philosophy would make but an awkward figure, may sometimes have a charming effect in poetry.”

“E’er since of old the haughty Thanes of Ross  
 (So to the simple swain tradition tells)  
 Were wont, with clans and ready vassals throng’d,  
 To wake the bounding stag, or guilty wolf;  
 There oft is heard at midnight, or at noon,  
 Beginning faint, but rising still more loud  
 And nearer, voice of hunters and of hounds,  
 And horns, hoarse-winded, blowing far and keen,  
 Forthwith the hubbub multiplies; the gale  
 Labours with wilder shrieks, and rifer din  
 Of hot pursuit; the broken cry of deer,  
 Mangled by throttling dogs; the shouts of men,  
 And hoofs thick-beating on the hollow hill.  
 Sudden, the grazing heifer in the vale  
 Starts at the tumult, and the herdsman’s ears  
 Tingle with inward dread. Aghast he eyes  
 The mountain’s height, and all the ridges round;  
 Yet not one trace of living wight discerns:  
 Nor knows, o’eraw’d and trembling as he stands,  
 To what, or whom, he owes his idle fear,  
 To ghost, to witch, to fairy, or to fiend;  
 But wonders; and no end of wondering finds.”<sup>30</sup>

6. Lastly, and perhaps to a philosophic mind most significant, as it is most general, is the case where *both rarity and lack of explanation are created for any object in the universe by isolating it in thought from its environment*.—It requires but the focusing of the attention exclusively upon any one thing, however humble or mighty, from a blade of spear-grass to Sirius

<sup>30</sup> *Albania*, a poem. London 1737, folio. Beattie, J., *Essays on Poetry and Music*, Edinb. 1778, p. 185.

himself, in order to render that object a supernal and unaccountable wonder. Divorce the commonest detail from its sheltering cluster of accustomed relations, and the sense of being baffled in the face of questions of nature and origin is so overwhelming that, though a thousand times and more the thing may have been tacitly accepted and used as a perfectly understood object, yet the entire mystery of life itself is felt to be gathered into its particular circle.

On Earth, in Air, amidst the Seas and Skies,  
Mountainous Heaps of Wonders rise;  
Whose tow'ring Strength will ne'er submit  
To Reason's Batt'ries, or the Mines of Wit.<sup>31</sup>

The significance of the case is well summed up by Lazarus: "In der nothwendigen Isolirung der Betrachtung liegt die psychologische Ursache für die Anschauung des Wunders als solchen, daher aber kann jede einzelne Naturerscheinung wie ein Wunder auf den Beschauer wirken, wenn er die Betrachtung absichtlich isolirt. . . . Sobald wir aber dasselbe Ding in seinem realen Zusammenhang mit anderen sehen, verschwindet das Gefühl des Wunderbaren. Die wissenschaftliche Betrachtung kennt kein Wunder, weil sie die Erscheinungen niemals isolirt, stets nach den Ursachen sucht und auch die nicht sogleich gefundenen stets mit Gewissheit in anderen endlichen Erscheinungen voraussetzt."<sup>32</sup> The last statement is, of course, exact only in an ideal fashion. Even scientific curiosity, as we have observed, is hardly ever so well trained as entirely to give over wondering at the rare in its fields of experience.

It is necessary to pause a moment for the purpose of providing against any misconception of the relations between wonder and curiosity that might arise from a treatment so schematic as the one hitherto adopted. For the purposes of clear exposition the state of wonder has been represented as though it were always subsequent to states of curiosity. Now, while the apogee of wonder is indeed reached after the failure of curiosity to find a solution, the lesser degrees of wonder do not always and only occur subsequent to the attempts of curiosity. On the con-

<sup>31</sup> Matthew Prior, *An Ode*, 1688.

<sup>32</sup> M. Lazarus, *Das Leben der Seele*, Berlin 1883, I, 299.

trary, wonder may often precede curiosity. A momentary oblivion of hypotheses may allow wonder the position of priority. Reason may be caught napping, and so the field momentarily may be left to wonder. This case is somewhat subject to confusion with the fifth of the six typical cases above—the case where inertia of mind prefers the quiescent condition of wonder to the energetic search for reasons. Still more confusing is its relation to astonishment; and it is probable that the majority of cases where wonder is thought to precede curiosity are really cases of that temporary paralysis of mental function we have called amazement.

Again, wonder and curiosity exist side by side. If wonder, in its aspect of baffled reason, may be partially defined as the feeling-tone of the failure to adapt rationally a new relation to the fund of old relations held in memory, it logically follows that every attempt at adaptation, every passing in trial of successive hypotheses, will be attended with the sense of partial failure, and, therefore, with the feeling of incipient wonder. Moreover, this momentary failure of each successive hypothesis adumbrates a final failure of all hypotheses,—the possibility of an ultimate, complete bafflement. This is indeed the rule of experience. So closely do stages of lapsing wonder and tentative hypothesis follow one upon another, that the ordinary mind does not distinguish between them, as is clearly witnessed by the confusion of wonder and curiosity in the common phrase “I wonder what this is?”; or “I wonder if this is right, or that?” Such phrases are constantly used while curiosity is in full swing; and to say “I wonder what this is,” is equivalent to saying “I am curious to know what this is.” The phrase unconsciously attests the fact that wonder and curiosity are after all inextricably intermingled,—if they are not two aspects, the one emotional and the other intellectual, of the same process. Wonder is primarily an emotion of the mind—the sensory accompaniment, as it were, of the mental and motor activities of curiosity. It reaches its acme when the mental attempt at adaptation, having failed, exists only potentially as a suspense of the faculties engaged in the adaptative processes.

But that pause of the faculties, that suspense of the processes, that moment of complete wonder, is itself recognized by the mind as one of its characteristic states, and remembered as such. Thus, and the point is extremely important, wonder becomes a concept. The emotion receives its conceptual baptism; and henceforward it is recognized as an intellectual category. From this double nature of wonder—its experience as an emotion and its recognition as a conceptual state—have come the extreme confusion of its contradictory usages as a term, and the difficulty of its analysis and psychological description.<sup>33</sup>

The concept of wonder, when once established, is liable, especially in uneducated minds, to frequent and immediate association with all unusual stimuli. A strange creaking of doors at night, tappings at the window-sill or at the bed-post, the creepy sensations of fear itself at such times, immediately call up the wonder concept; and associations so formed issue in the various forms of spiritual superstition. Indeed, it may be said that in such superstition the association of unusual experiences with the wonder concept has, by long repetition, become immediate and habitual, if not instinctive. Rational curiosity plays but small part in such a state of mind; indeed, rational curiosity is throttled by superstition. In this and similar ways the wonder concept comes to be employed so repeatedly and universally that it is often felt to have an existence of its own in the scheme of things—to be an entity, or law of exceptions, from which proceed all that is unusual, improbable, or, according to ordinary rule, impossible. And, finally, the readiness with which the concept comes to be applied reacts upon its stimulus, so that many a minor circumstance, which otherwise might have escaped notice, comes to be felt as extraordinary.

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<sup>33</sup> This double nature of wonder explains the peculiar relations of wonder to the corroding effect of time. On the one hand, because of the extremely transitory nature of that suspense which gives the emotional acme of wonder, the emotion is entirely subject to the deadening effects of time; on the other hand, the *idea* of wonder remains, is dimmed by time far more gradually, and is capable of resuscitation or reinvigoration at any moment. Of course, the reinvigoration of the idea is usually attended with a more or less acute resurrection of the emotion; but in this case the stimulus is, as it were, second-hand (being the memory of a state, and not the original state itself), and so can rarely revive the emotion in its original intensity.

In turn, to create the further confusion of gods and miracles, the mind, by its usual mythological trick of externalizing its workings in nature, has dubbed the stimuli of the wonder state wonderful—has personified its own feelings of itself in external events and appearances, and then has explained the former by the latter on the old magical fallacy that like causes like. Such unconscious reasoning in a circle is still a part of our present-day mythology.

But superstition, and gods and miracles, are carrying the argument beyond the consideration of the cases of mere rarity into the higher degrees of the unusual. It is possible now to turn to these higher degrees.

The unusual that is improbable demands first attention.

It is to be noted, at once, that the improbable is more often told, than experienced; for actual experience clouds improbability with the tangibility of an occurrence, and reduces its character to one of mere rarity. Consequently, the improbable is usually encountered in the tales of others, or in the imaginative retrospection of the teller himself. In literature, therefore, which in some of its forms is a worked-over tale, the improbable may be expected to thrive as in its native tropics. There, too, its conceptual character, its character of an inference from the rule of experience, will find its expression in the crafty marshalling of experiences not by the laws of natural chance, but by the judgment of the artist.

In the second place, it must be at once conceded that the inferential character of the concept of improbability may contain on the bare face of it a skepticism by no means favorable to wonder. Thus, for example, the very pronouncing as improbable the tale of the Czar's visit to Gretchen may intimate a disbelief which would sooner ridicule the tale than see its wonder. Improbability, as a judgment advanced with definite assurance, certainly produces laughter rather than wonder.

But, on the other hand, the nature of improbability is by no means constant. Its concept is subject always to the change incident to its relative character. The individual who realizes this fact more or less clearly, or who temperamentally is inclined to wavering convictions, not seldom advances the ridi-

cule of improbability with very feeble assurance. Constantly feeling that the improbable is not impossible, but that it may be only a higher and rarer degree of the unusual, he is by no means ready to indulge in hasty ridicule. To him the improbability increases the wonder. His mind, very likely, has already developed a readiness to apply the wonder concept. Therefore, the hesitancy of mental adaptation, which the improbable arouses in him, is brought into immediate association with wonder. And it is the very contradictory nature of this vacillating, undetermined state of mind, where judgment varies from a half-hearted assertion of skepticism to the undecided feeling of wonder, and back again, that serves best of all to keep the state of wonder alive and vivid. But of that further, when the relations of belief and wonder are considered by themselves.

Here it must be added that when the improbable is taken in this sense, as a higher and rarer degree of the unusual, its relation to curiosity brings out a new aspect which should be strongly emphasized. In all cases so far considered, both those of suddenness and rarity, there has always been the possibility of a state of curiosity intervening between the stimulus and the wonder state; and the curiosity has depended, as it always does, upon the attempt at mental adaptation. With the bafflement of that attempt, wonder has succeeded. But in the case of the distinctly improbable (a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde story, for instance; or, better still, the story of a trip to the moon and back: supposing, in both cases, no explanation is offered of the circumstances) the immediate recognition of the wild divergence from the probable tends to abbreviate, or even, in some cases, entirely abrogate, the state of curiosity in favor of one of wonder or marvel. Within the bounds of belief the very improbability clouds the effort of curiosity to find a sufficient explanation, and gives in advance a sense of the abortiveness in which the effort must end. Afterwards, to be sure, the habit of curiosity, the forlorn hope of gaining some clue to the more than remarkable condition, may occasion some effort, more or less abortive, toward finding a solution. But the stronger the improbability, the less hope there is in such effort. At any rate, the effort is in the great majority of cases secondary to the wonder state.

The relation of improbability to explanatory hypotheses, and to the feeling of the marvellous, may be summarized in five cases corresponding to the first five of the six cases in which the relations of rarity to explanation and wonder have already been tabulated.<sup>34</sup> For the sake of clearness the phraseology of the former passage is copied here *verbatim*.

1. Where a seeming improbability ceases with the giving of the explanation.—In this case marvelling ceases immediately; the subject, in discovering that the improbability was only a cheat of seeming, feels himself the victim of a trick. Mrs. Radcliffe's marvels are of this sort. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, for instance, the Something behind the veil in Montoni's castle, the weird singing in the woods of St. Clair, and Ludovico's disappearance, are but three of numberless cases where a marvel lasts through many chapters only to be explained tamely as a most matter-of-fact affair when one's suspense has reached the breaking point. It is impossible to keep up a show of marvel when the explanation reveals the rarity as an imposition.

2. Where an actual improbability still remains after the explanation has been given.—In this case marvelling persists, but, in general, with a gradually decreasing vividness. In Hawthorne's *Rappacini's Daughter*, the wonderful Beatriee is at last understood as one who "had been nourished with poisons from her birth upward, until her whole nature was so imbued with them that she herself had become the deadliest poison in existence. Poison was her element of life. With that rich perfume of her breath she blasted the very air. Her love would have been poison."—"Is this not a marvellous tale?" asks Baglioni.—Yes, a marvel to explain a marvel; or, as it may be stated, an improbability still an improbability after the explanation! It need hardly be pointed out that the objection that this explanation does not scientifically and exactly explain anything, is quite beside the mark. Under most circumstances, other things being equal, the very lapse of time will produce a gradual weakening of the feeling of the marvellous in this case.

3. Where the sense of improbability is lost, although no explanation is ascertained.—Here the sense of improbability is lost.

<sup>34</sup> See above, pp. 63 ff.

because, by the multiplication of similar improbabilities, we lose the very sense of their improbability. Marvelling dies a speedy death under this circumstance. The constant repetition of improbable prowess upon the part of the heroes of fairy-stories, the endless rehearsal of the improbable doughtiness of the knights in *Le Morte d'Arthur* (provided, always, one is reading credulously like a child, and providing, also, one's reading is continuous enough to realize the repetition) have undeniably a dulling effect upon our capacity for marvelling. The effect is analogous to that loss of the sense of the marvellous that would ensue in real life could we conceive of Beatrice Rappacinis becoming as common as Mary Smiths. Even though there were no more explanation than accompany the Mary Smiths, these Beatrice Rappacinis could not be felt as marvellous. Repetition establishes probability, fact; it destroys improbability.

4. Where the sense of improbability is kept, and no explanation is presented.—In this case there is no multiplication of the objects of improbability; and the feeling of the marvellous keeps only a precarious life (unless complicated by other emotions, such as fear<sup>35</sup>), because it is subject to the corroding effect of time. To refer to Hawthorne's tale again, one might be forced so constantly to live with, or see, the beautiful but baleful Beatrice, that, although one never learned her secret, the marvel of her, while yet recognized at intervals of special reflection, would be hardly felt, or altogether absent, for the greater part of the time. In literature, the case is represented by the curve of marvelling—first rising, and then, with time, falling—which credulity describes in repeated readings of Beowulf's fight with Grendel, or of the slaying of Goliath by David, or of the destruction of the palace by Samson. After imagination has played its part and intensified the marvel, after the marvel has become a well-known story, often repeated, thoroughly familiar,—its pristine power is dimmed, not to be revived except under peculiar and infrequent circumstances. But the marvel that springs from the improbable has a greater initial force and a slower decline than the wonder that springs from mere rarity.

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<sup>35</sup> See below, p. 90.



5. Where improbability is kept, but one or more indefinite hypotheses, vaguely felt, are disregarded, left unexplored,—the mind refusing to concentrate upon them because it prefers the idleness of marvelling to the exertion of curiosity.—Often—perhaps because of the natural inertia of the mind, or, it may be, because of what Ribot so vaguely calls the innate love of the marvellous—often the mind deliberately prefers the absence of explanation. For the present, an example may be drawn from Tieck's tale of *The Goblet* as translated in Carlyle's *German Romance*.<sup>36</sup> When Old Albert places the beautiful gold cup between himself and Ferdinand, and the wonderful form begins to rise from it, mist-like, gradually clearing in outline, many a reader would fain forget the indicated explanations of auto-hypnosis and suggestion in order to revel in the rarity of the show. Or Aylmer's tricks of legerdemain, in Hawthorne's tale, *The Birthmark*, though confessedly the work of a cunning scientist familiar with the mirror-tricks of illusion, are yet, by many a mind, too strongly felt as wonderful to allow any hunting up of the half-forgotten chapters of a text-book on physics.

The contrary-to-fact degree, or stage, of the unusual, which begins to make its appearance with the improbable, rises to its height in the next aspect of our subject,—the impossible. With the impossible, as with the improbable, belief is a necessary prerequisite to the wonder state. But it will be better to postpone the discussion of belief to a separate category, and to assume for the present that the impossible may and does eventuate in wonder under the tutelage of whatever may be the proper degree or kind of belief.

When the divergence from the rule of experience is carried into the realm ordinarily designated as the impossible, there is a perfect absence of the rational hypotheses of curiosity by the very nature of the case. Witches, hobgoblins, land of faery, Joshua's ruling of the sun, Circe's magical pranks, the descent of Orpheus to Hades,—these, and all their kind, suggest rational hypotheses only to comparative mythologists. Wonder and spirits are here supreme. This is wonder's own stronghold:

<sup>36</sup> Carlyle, *German Romance*, ed. H. D. Traill, N. Y. 1901, I, 369.

the outposts are the improbable; the citadel is the impossible. From outpost to citadel the story of wonder extends as in a climax, until upon the citadel itself we behold, in an apotheosis of wonder, the dead risen to life and time turned backward in its course. The world is filled with magicians and their familiars. *Scop* and *troubadour* sing of enchantment. We more than wonder. We *marvel*.

Here, then, at last, is the *marvellous*. It stands at the apex of a general tendency away from the ordinary, which, after taking its rise in small matters of sudden stimuli, and passing on through a multiplicity of grades of the merely rare, finally culminates in the higher reaches of the improbable and impossible. The marvellous is a step out of reality. Because of that very fact, the marvellous naturally belongs rather to the tale of imagination than to the reality of physical adventure. What but *telling* can involve the marvellous,—what but that telling which sooner or later finds its way into the form of literature? Illusions and hallucinations, or, from a different point of view, miracles and visions, are the only exceptions to this rule of the unexperienced; and they, because of the supreme individual necessity of telling them to one's fellows, also must soon find themselves brought into literary form, or some precursory condition of such form. It is strange enough, and a fact that cannot be insisted upon too strongly, that the very passing out of actual fact, the very escape from hypothesis, is what throws the marvellous into the arms of literature. Here is indeed to the front the lying genius of words,—that wondrous capability that, judged from a moral point of view, afforded Greek philosophy, as we have already seen, the all too pious beginning of a literary criticism of the marvellous.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Present usage of the term marvellous illustrates this character of impossibility. Nowadays, the marvel *par excellence* is the tale of spiritualism, the alleged feat of clairvoyance, the miracle of the Church. These things, directly contrary to usual experience, transcending the possible as we ordinarily conceive the possible, are the things that we now commonly term marvels. True, we say such and such a piece of acting is "marvellously well done"; but the very attempt, of which we are conscious, to reach after the most superlative word in our effort at that polite compliment, is proof in itself of the exaggeration of circumstance to which the word strictly belongs. "Wonderfully well done," would be the truer phrase, signifying "rarely well done"; marvellous should be reserved for those cases that smack decidedly of the improbable and impossible.

In the rising plane of wonder states established by the gradual ascent from suddenness and mere rarity to the improbable and impossible, it would be very convenient if we could draw a dividing line across the middle and call all states and stimuli belonging to the lower half—the sudden and unusual classes—wonderful; and all states and stimuli belonging to the higher half—the improbable and impossible—marvellous. This limitation of terms is, in fact, here proposed; and henceforth, throughout this book, the terms will be used, technically, under this limitation. That for such a technical distinction there is some warrant in the general use of the words, is at once obvious from the previous discussion of usage.<sup>38</sup> *Marvellous* is indeed a heavier term than wonderful, and contains in its fringe of sublimer and more awful association the warrant for such a limitation.

But to return to our analysis. The careful reader may have discovered an apparent flaw in the reasoning of the last paragraph but one. Miracles and visions were there cited as exceptions to the rule that marvels cannot be experienced, and yet, in the same breath, they were put forward as examples of the impossible. The marvellous seems with a vengeance to have carried us beyond the bounds of the logical. What can solve this difficulty, and also, at the same time, remove another objection, which must have been felt by every mind, *viz.* that the very impossibility cited destroys by its irrationality the sense of the marvellous and substitutes that of the ridiculous? The answer is not far to seek. Surprise, curiosity,—these have led us to wonder. Our next clue contains the reply to the present difficulty. Belief! There is the factor in the wonder-complex which steps into the logical breach, renders the impossible possible to experience, and drives the ridiculous from the citadel of marvel. Belief makes all things possible without destroying the magic land of the impossible. It does this by its own irrationality. By accepting as real what reason warns it is impossible, belief is

<sup>38</sup> See above, pp. 8-13. One can hardly use the long phrase 'the emotion of marvelling' each time it is necessary to speak of that emotion. For this reason, it has been necessary to extend the meaning of the word 'marvel' to designate the 'emotion of marvelling'; just as 'wonder' designates the 'emotion of wondering.' 'Marvel,' with this new meaning, will often be found in the following pages.

enabled to keep the sense of the impossible while denying it. As Principal Jevons remarks, "the tenacity with which a belief is held does not vary with the reasonableness of the belief or the amount of evidence for it; but, on the contrary, those people are usually most confident in their opinions who have the least reason to be so."<sup>39</sup> Thus, while to unbelief visions are hallucinations and miracles are illusions, they are to belief particular realities that do not destroy the general concept of impossibility. And as such they, and their like, are marvellous,—not ridiculous. The impossible, says belief, is possible in rare cases, perhaps in very rare cases. In one word, it is through belief that impossibility comes to be regarded as the supreme case of the unusual, or of rarity.

Thus belief makes marvel,<sup>40</sup>—that is, clears the way for the development of marvel. But marvel also makes belief. The vividness with which a miraculous event first stirs the emotion of wonder, before the mind has busied itself logically with suggestions of irrationality and doubt, has much to do with the perpetuation of the belief in the miracle. Other things being equal—that is, supposing in a given individual the rational index remains constant under a series of suggestions of the miraculous—the greater the initial emotion of wonder, the more durable will be the belief in the miracle. This follows from the general proposition that vividness in any emotion tends to induce a belief in the reality of the object or supposed cause of the emotion. Familiar examples of this general truth are found in the emotional make-believe of children, where the very vividness of the emotions aroused tends always to give the zest of reality to the childish fiction; and in the illusion of the stage or the novel, where, again, the vivid emotional participation of the spectator or participant temporarily cheats him into a belief in the reality of the dramatic fiction. Who has not read some weird and awful book<sup>41</sup> far into the wee hours of the night and had his fear of vampires and were-wolves so vividly aroused

<sup>39</sup> F. B. Jevons, *Introd. to History of Religion*, London 1902, p. 20.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. above, note 38.

<sup>41</sup> Like Bram Stoker's *The Vampire*, for instance, or Robert Chambers' *The King in Yellow*.

that he has found himself half-believing, for a moment, those horrible fictions, and starting nervously at ghostly tappings of the breeze on the window lest they might be the mysteriously fascinating call of the vampire? What so subtly persuades us to the illusion of reality as this intense play of emotions? Pain inveigles us into belief in the very desperate reality of the sufferings of Lear and Othello; joy persuades us unawares into belief in the rollicking reality of Falstaff.

The very simulation of emotions by those who are dramatically inclined leads such actors into a confusion of fact and make-believe, until they can with difficulty tell when they are acting and when not. The emotions are always attached to objects: when the emotions are intensely active the mind naturally assumes the objects, and assumes them as real because the emotions are real. This is the "sympathetic magic" of the emotions.

Wonder, therefore, or marvelling, to speak more strictly, as one of the emotions, will, when vividly stirred, produce this tendency to belief. Let the individual once experience the glamor of a great marvel; let him once feel the ecstacy of the Hereulean demi-god whose powers transcend ordinary physical limitations; let him once take part in the voyage to the Hesperides, in the cleansing of the Augean Stables, in the magic of Jack the Giant Killer, in the quest of the Graal, in the mystery of Parzival,—and his belief in the reality of these powers and adventures is so in love with itself that, against his own mind's later and calmer suggestion of irrationality, he will cry out, like Tertullian, "*possible quia impossibile est.*" Have not the marvels of the church always been a chief ally in gaining the belief of a certain class? The air of awe and sublime wonder in a stately cathedral overtakes even the mind of the skeptic, and he finds himself, under that glamor, moving faintly back to the belief of his childhood. Lost in marvelling at the legerdemain of the Hindu fakir, we forget for a moment that what we see is not real.<sup>42</sup> Who does not marvel at Wagner's Parzival until his imagination is gripped with a great reality? even though it

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<sup>42</sup> Of course the "seeing" is a stronger ally of belief than the marvelling; but the marvelling also persuades us. What we feel seems real, as well as what we see; and here the feeling, the marvelling, is occasioned by what we see.

be the transcendental persuasion that there is a reality, a realness, to the spiritual truth embodied there? Is not the very transcendental character of that persuasion of reality the very cry of Tertullian? just the marvel-bred assumption of another infinite world, not limited, like this world, by the possible? Other minds find themselves half-believing in the marvellous reincarnation drama in Rider Haggard's two books, *She* and *Ayesha*. So the tale of examples might progress indefinitely. Nor is it claimed here that in every example the vividness of the marvel alone produces the impulse to a belief in the reality of the object; such impulses are of course complex. But it is claimed that vivid marvelling aids that impulse mightily.

What admits of this initial vividness of marvel is, of course, a certain show of probability,—just the show that will be sufficient at first to impose upon the degree of rationality possessed by the individual. “Probable impossibilities,” says Aristotle, “are to be preferred to improbable possibilities.”<sup>43</sup> When this condition is united with a great initial intensity of marvel, even the sternest of logical minds wavers, and remembers fearfully that after all we move in a world unknown, against a black background of infinite possibility. Marvel makes belief, and belief makes marvel: they act upon each other in a circular fashion—a vicious circle, maybe—but a circle surely!

Let us consider again the necessity of belief to marvel. Belief is, indeed, necessary to all cases of wonder, particularly to the marvellous; but only in certain degrees or measures is it consonant with the continuance of that emotion. We have already noticed the ridicule that results, instead of marvelling, when the impossible encounters perfect disbelief. To such disbelief a unicorn is a stimulus to impatience and raillery, and the marvellous is a synonym for the exploded beliefs and fancies of crude ages or uneducated masses. Indeed, there exists, through the medium of belief, a curious relation between the marvellous and the comic. The two are quarrelsome first cousins, as it were. Given a belief of some sort—actual or poetic—in the improbabilities and impossibilities of medieval romances, and wonder and marvel stand forth claiming our serious delight

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<sup>43</sup> See above, p. 39.

and reverence; but given a disbelief in the same objects—in magical swords, and astonishing prowess, and miracles of the Graal—and immediately the mockery of Cervantes routs the marvellous with a flapping of windmills. To Butler the wonder-prating Puritan becomes a Hudibras; Swift sneers out his disbelief in *The Tale of a Tub*. All marvels become comic when deserted by belief; but all comedy by no means becomes marvellous when nurtured by a careful belief. Thus, the underlying pretension of the marvellous—its basic weakness of the fictitious and of an imaginative, *a priori* assumption—is exposed, in contrast to the greater, simpler truth of comedy. Comedy is the cure of the marvellous, its natural antidote—the antidote found in close proximity to the dangerous object, just as in the field (it used to be said) nature always arranges poison and antidote side by side.

But the individual who passes from the intellectual stage that ridicules the older marvels, to the further stage of a serious, philosophical skepticism, is, curiously enough, again on the road to marvel. When the universe becomes one great hesitation, and doubt, or even agnosticism, confronts the mind at every turn, there comes stealing back upon the heart the sense of everlasting mystery and wonder. The skeptic has purified the mystery of life of its anthropomorphic thaumaturgy, but in doing that he has cut loose from certain relations that pretended to explain things by man-conceived marvels: the original mystery—more mysterious than the man-made marvel—confronts him forever. He finds himself in the position of philosophic wonder, already described above as the sixth case under the relations of rarity, explanation, and wonder.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, the historical and psychological course of the development of wonder may be said to reach from anthropomorphic thaumaturgy, through the burlesque and parody and satire of that thaumaturgy, on to the philosophic wonder of the serious skeptic or agnostic.

But full and perfect belief is only less dangerous to the marvellous than full disbelief. For by full belief the marvel is quickly assimilated, is associated in a hierarchy of similar im-

<sup>44</sup> See above, p. 65.

possibilities, and so is laid open to the constant danger of losing its anomalous character and of blunting its uniqueness in the mass of the fully accommodated. The impossibility ceases actively to be felt as such. The extreme case of this sort is that of the undeveloped or uncritical mind that has accepted marvels as matters of fact, relying implicitly upon authority,—as a child in his religious belief, or a savage in his traditions. To the unlearned mind, incapable of conceiving of transgressions of natural law, no conception of impossibility as such is possible. Minor wonder such a mind may experience when rarities in its narrow daily experience occur; but marvels of creation, demi-urgic power, and the like, suggest no further wonder than that accompanying the sense of exaggerated power.<sup>45</sup> Such a mind may wonder, but it cannot marvel.

Somewhere, then, between absolute disbelief and perfect belief, somewhere in the region of alternating doubt and belief,<sup>46</sup> but with the greater weight on the latter, lies that degree or sort of belief that is the greatest abettor of wonder and marvel.

Before leaving this important clue of belief it will be well to summarize the relations of belief to the five cases of improbability drawn up above.<sup>47</sup>

I. Very often the exploration of an improbability reduces the case of improbability to one of mere rarity. The mysterious disappearance of Ludovico,<sup>48</sup> for instance, from the haunted room in the castle, seems due to the awful influence of the unquiet spirits who were supposed to infect the chamber. But when this improbability, or impossibility, is explained, some chapters later, by the information that certain bandits had been in the habit of entering the room through a secret tunnel and

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<sup>45</sup> See below, p. 94.

<sup>46</sup> If the term belief were generally understood to mean just this alternation, the greater part of this attempt at specification of meaning would of course be unnecessary. Professor Baldwin argues that "a conflict between the established, the habitual, the taken for granted, on the one hand, and the new, raw, and violent, on the other hand, is necessary to excite doubt, which is the preliminary to belief." (J. M. Baldwin, *Mental Development*, New York 1900, p. 323 and Note 1.) But the confusion between philosophical, scientific, and popular uses of the word appears to make necessary an extended statement of the relation of "belief" to wonder and marvel.

<sup>47</sup> See above, pp. 71-73.

<sup>48</sup> See above, p. 71.



making it their rendezvous, and that they had carried off Ludovico through this tunnel, the improbability is at once reduced to the rank of a mere rarity. Such reductions in rank leave the improbability in one or the other of the first two cases of mere rarity.<sup>49</sup>

(a) Now, if one's belief has been excited by such a spurious improbability as that of the spiriting away of Ludovico,<sup>50</sup> the explanation that shows that the improbability was really only a cheat of seeming, leaves the believer annoyed at the trick that has been played upon him,—often so annoyed that he loses not only his first marvel, but also any wonder that otherwise might have attached to the rarity of the unsuspected and skilfully hidden tunnel. Disbelief in the improbability, on the other hand, would only have its attendant ridicule of the mystery aggravated by the explanation of the marvel's spurious character.

(b) In the case of Rappacini's daughter,<sup>51</sup> where the improbability of her weird beauty is "explained" by the further improbability of her diet of poisons, the very retention of the attitude of marvelling is dependent upon one's belief in the second improbability. Otherwise the explanation would not explain, but would only heap further ridicule upon a circumstance already under smiling suspicion. The explanation of improbability by improbabilities is illogical; but belief is not cast down by the lack of logic, and out of the irrationality springs the marvel.

II. (a) Where no explanation of the improbability is given, full belief in the improbability practically reduces all possible cases of unexplained improbability to the third case above,<sup>52</sup>—where familiarity with the marvel destroys its emotional suggestiveness. In romance, full belief in the improbable prowess of the Christian conquerors of the Saracens renders that prowess almost as matter-of-fact as does its constant repetition. The sense of contrast with modern feats of arms is always present.

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<sup>49</sup> See above, p. 63.

<sup>50</sup> Case No. I, above, p. 71.

<sup>51</sup> Case No. II, above, p. 71.

<sup>52</sup> See above, p. 71.

but the sense of that difference, and its imaginative appreciation, are dulled alike by endless repetition of the marvel and by an absolute, matter-of-fact belief in its reality. Again, full belief in Beatrice Rappacini—with absolutely no question or doubt—would be equivalent, practically, to living among a Mary-Smith-multitude of Beatrice Rappacinis.

(b) A vacillation of belief and doubt (*i.e.*, belief proper) in connection with an unexplained improbability, results in an extension of the fourth case.<sup>53</sup> That case, it may be recalled, is the one where the sense of the improbable is not lost by an ascertained explanation, but eventuates in a marvel which is subject to the corroding effect of time. Now, belief in improbability is of course necessary to a sense of the marvellous. But, on the other hand, a belief in the marvel may involve quite definitely the irrational hypothesis of spiritual or other supernatural power. If so—if belief applies this hypothesis to the explanation of the original improbability—we have as an explanation what may itself be regarded as an improbability or impossibility. An improbability “explains” an improbability. Such a twist to the case carries us over at once into the second case, just mentioned; and, in turn, as a result of the high degree of rarity involved, there is also a tendency to arrest that case’s rule of the decreasing vividness of the marvel. Moreover, the marvellous circumstance associated with the greater marvel of spiritual or magical power is always and easily susceptible of revivification. A great variety of circumstances are continually ministering to the revival of the marvel of the spirit. Belief and its supernatural marvel may tire at times, may nod, and mumble their creed; but they are only napping,—they are not dead. Hope, humbug, and the belief in the supernatural spring eternal in the human breast.

(c) Full disbelief in an unexplained improbability naturally results in a spirit of ridicule that ekes out what it lacks of explanation of the improbability, and of confirmation of its own skepticism, with a continual and repeated satire. Unable to congratulate itself upon its own acumen, as in the case of the spurious marvel of Ludovico’s disappearance, and rather

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<sup>53</sup> See above, p. 72.

inherently weakened by the continual suggestion of "it might have been," disbelief nevertheless makes a successful front against the impossible by at once denying *in toto* the possibility of super-lawful forces and agencies; and it lends the influence of this skeptical position toward the impossible to its disbelief in the improbable. Here, of course, belong the great marvel burlesques of the world. From *Don Quixote* to *A Yankee at King Arthur's Court*, the fun-making progresses in varied measure and kind; but always behind the ridicule, and usually untouched by its Rabelaisian hand, lie the greater "impossibles," which can never be disproved or explained. As soon as the unbelieving spirit touches these it becomes of necessity serious and dreadfully in earnest,—a first step back, as has already been said, to the wonder-view of the universe; and the entering, too, of the sixth typical case of marvel.

Finally, to come to the end of the clue of belief, it need only be said that what has been observed of the relation of belief to the improbable is also true of its relation to the impossible, with a certain intensification of all the processes, due to the higher degree of "rarity" involved in the impossible. The following tables will serve to clarify those inter-relations of wonder, marvel, rarity, explanation, improbability, impossibility, and belief that have already been taken up under the six typical cases.

#### A. MERE RARITY—EXPLANATION—WONDER.

- I Seeming rarity ceases with giving of explanation: wonder ceases immediately.
- II Actual rarity still remains after explanation has been given: wonder retained, but with gradually decreasing vividness.
- III Rarity ceases, although no explanation given: wonder speedily lost.
- IV Rarity persists, and no explanation given: wonder gradually lost with passing of time.
- V Rarity kept, explanations disregarded: wonder in strong ascendancy.
- VI Rarity gained by isolation of phenomenon from its relations: wonder in strong ascendancy.

B. SENSE OF IMPROBABILITY—EXPLANATION—BELIEF—  
MARVELLOUS.

- I Sense of improbability, followed by explanation: often reduced to mere rarity. Case I or II under A.—Compare, also, p. 81, above.
- II Sense of improbability, no explanation:
  - (a) with full disbelief: ridiculous, instead of marvellous.
  - (b) with full belief: matter of fact, instead of marvellous. Similar to case III under A.
  - (c) with vacillation of belief and doubt: marvellous, similar to Case IV under A., but with greater initial force and slower decline.

C. SENSE OF IMPOSSIBILITY—EXPLANATION—BELIEF—  
MARVELLOUS.

- I Sense of impossibility, followed by explanation: often reduced to mere rarity, Case I or II, under A.—Compare, also, p. 81, above.
- II Sense of impossibility, no explanation:
  - (a) with full disbelief: ridiculous, instead of marvellous.
  - (b) with full belief: matter of fact, instead of marvellous. Similar to Case III under A.
  - (c) with vacillation of belief and doubt: marvellous, similar to Case IV under A, and Case II (c) under B; but with far greater initial force and far slower decline than in either of those cases.

One of the chief characters of the marvellous may now fitly be described. The belief in the impossible, when felt as a logical inconsistency, leads always to the adoption of a subterfuge that in turn opens the way to new and ever wilder marvels. The inconsistency is universally obviated by supplying an ideal standard of possibility. "Not probable or possible as things go in this world," runs the remark, "but quite so in another and more spiritual world!" Thus belief ekes out the paucity of fact. "Uncertainty," as Bain says, "is the realm of ideal possibility, the scope for imaginative outgoings."<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Bain, *Emotions and the Will*, p. 222.

The free fashion in which the marvellous disports itself in the ideal realm of imagination is the most notable of its manners. And if here its retainers are the powers of imagination, its courts and show places are the creeds of religion and the poetry of literature; for the realm of the ideal may belong to poetical belief or to the faith of the pious enthusiast. In it there is freedom,—freedom of all third dimensional limitations. Spirit rises from flesh. And this assertion of an ideal freedom in connection with the marvellous, or, it may be said, *by* the marvellous, is the very circumstance that recommended the refinement of medieval and other marvel to the thirsting souls of the patriots and literary revolutionists of Romanticism. No wonder that the patriots of Germany nursed and flaunted their sense of marvel! It was for the freedom in which those marvels moved and had their being—not for the mere novelty and strangeness of headless horsemen and singing trees—that those ardent, anarchistic souls longed. Here too was the reason why the slower, saner spirit of Wordsworth “marvellized” nature and the commonplace; and in doing so he showed himself as true a romanticist as Coleridge, though he went to no medieval font for his subject and took no part in the wild *Schwärmerci* of the world beyond Cumberland. He had tried the much-vaunted, revolutionary freedom, but had found a better one at Rydal Mount, more to his liking and Dorothy’s.<sup>55</sup>

The unfettering of imagination in this realm of ideal belief demands the weight of separate mention, for any description of wondering that neglected to emphasize the part played by the inventive faculty in heightening the feeling of wonder would not

<sup>55</sup> Professor Charles Mills Gayley, in his classes at the University of California, has long preached the desire for freedom as the solvent for the Romantic movement; and it is with great interest, therefore, that I have found myself in this independent search into the marvellous again and again brought face to face with just this *Heimweh* for an ideal freedom. (Cf. Gayley, C. M., *Rep. Eng. Com.*, New York 1903, vol. I, *Introduction, Hist. View of Eng. Com.*, pp. xx, lxxxvii, *et passim*.) Indeed, upon reflection, Professor Gayley’s observation has the simple inevitability of the truth. Nor can I refrain from appending the following quotation from Lazarus: “Hieraus erklärt sich psychologisch hinlänglich, weshalb das Wunder des Glaubens liebstes Kind ist; der Glaube ist Sehnsucht nach dem Unendlichen, und hier drängt sich die Vorstellung des Unendlichen unmittelbar bei der Erscheinung eines Endlichen auf. Dies ist die Bedeutung des Wunders und ohne sie wären die Wirkungen des Wunders selbst wunderbar.”—Lazarus, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

deserve its name. Imagination not only creates the marvel of story and *chanson*, but is itself the creature of wonderment. The enthralled percipient feels the stirrings, oftenest vague, and so the more impressive, of all his imaginative being, and the *avertissement* of self that ensues is one of the dearest, as it is one of the most familiar of the attendants in the train of wonder. Subtle, it is, too; possibly subtlest of the allurements of this complex emotion; and therewith is revealed one of the chief reasons for the normal and almost universal desire, if not appetency, toward experiencing the emotion. In another chapter, when we turn more to the historical side, or phylogeny, as it might be called, of wonder, the subject of imaginative activity will receive its due consideration; but, for the present, three points may be observed without fear of too frequent repetition: the marvellous as a stimulus to imagination, the immediate reaction of the state of marvelling, and the imaginative exaggeration of the marvellous object itself.

Enough has been said to make clear and enforce the first point. A baffled reason and the failure of hypotheses loose the wilder freaks of mind. No longer held by a rational outlook, imagination is left with full title to the most riotous of living. No vagary is too startling when the romance of other worlds and higher powers, the authentication of the actual existence of which is assumed by belief, is a perpetual challenge to the invention of wizards and angels, centaurs and seraphim, apples of Hesperides and trees of life. The marvellous is to the imagination what sleep is to dreams. Its very nature—its intangibility, its puzzlement, its commerce with the unknown—is naturally, perhaps physiologically, associated with the imaginative function of the mind. Therefore it is, that, upon the establishment of a state of marvelling by a particular object, all the vague crowd of other marvels and former imaginations, reinforced by untold new levies, the spawn of the moment, flit upon the mind with such instantaneous association and force of suggestion that the marvel itself is increased a hundredfold. Thus, circle-wise,<sup>56</sup> comes wonder stimulating imagination, the latter in

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<sup>56</sup> I have borrowed this term from Professor Baldwin's "circular-imitation." Cf. *Mental Development*, pp. 133, 264.

turn reacting to heighten the wonder, which, again, spurs on imagination still further; and so on indefinitely. We may suppose these processes of mutual encouragement to persist until fatigue, or another stronger demand, produces a change in attention. Often, however, they are the means of ascension into mystical trances, such, perhaps, as those of Swedenborg or Blake,—states that should be studied in the light of what is known of auto-suggestion and hypnosis. Such states, indeed, form a very proper part of the data present to the hand of the student of wonder for analysis and classification. They are the higher limits of the subject, the marvels of wonder. Nor should they be regarded as fruitless of empirical results. What more suggestive, physiologically, than the dream of Eliphaz?

“Now a thing was secretly brought to me,  
And mine ear received a whisper thereof.  
In thoughts from the visions of the night,  
When deep sleep falleth on men,  
Fear came upon me, and trembling,  
Which made all my bones to shake.  
Then a spirit passed before my face;  
The hair of my flesh stood up.  
It stood still, but I could not discern the appearance thereof;  
A form was before mine eyes:  
There was silence, and I heard a voice, . . .”<sup>57</sup>

It need hardly be pointed out now that one of the effects of imagination is to magnify and exaggerate the actual cause, objective or subjective, of the marvelling. The stimulating object does not remain the same to the consciousness of the percipient, but, in the course of all these heightening processes of a subjective nature, is continually changing. What was at first a minor circumstance looms large in a disordered field of marvel and fancy. Fear itself scarcely magnifies its object more than wonder, for it is imagination that is let loose in both cases. Who has not given supernatural interpretations to purely natural effects, the agency of which happened for the moment to be unknown? The inexplicable is immediately mysterious.

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<sup>57</sup> Job IV, 12-16. One need only turn to medieval saints' books to find similar descriptions of visions that come in waking hours. Cf., Jones, R. M., *Studies in Mystical Religion*, London 1909. For further treatment of this subject, see below, Chapters III, IV.

Knockings and table-turnings are immediately attributed to spirits of the dead. I have known a whole family to turn spiritualists because of a mysterious tapping that was heard only at meal-times, and that afterward proved to be the chickens striking the baseboards with their bills as they fed close to the house. That family in its first surprise, its astonishment, its fruitless search after causes, its unsatisfied curiosity, wonder, its fear, imagination, and its final sense of marvel as belief in spiritualistic phenomena dawned, afforded as vivid and typical a case of wondering with all its allied and concomitant states as could be desired. And in the course of it all the chance peckings of a few domestically inoffensive and greedy brown leghorns rose to the height of direct communications from the Unknown.

Finally, a word about the clue of fear. Fear is often found associated with the uncertainty of doubt and with the enduring sense of strangeness that characterize a well-developed state of marvel. It is not hard to appreciate the naturalness of this combination when the disturbing nature of the marvellous, its lack of adaptation, is put side by side with the element of shock from the strange and unknown that so often is the cause of fear. The relations between fear and the new and unexpected are too well known to need any elaboration here, but a caution in the matter is to be registered. Care must be taken to avoid confusing the fear that is associated with wonder and marvel and the fear that goes with surprise. Sully is in danger of offending here when he says: "On the other hand, wonder is related as a disturbing shock to the emotion of fear."<sup>58</sup> The word shock, as it stands in the quotation, suggests the suddenness and unpreparedness of surprise, rather than a enduring sense of strangeness. The intense shock, and the spasm of fear following it, are not conducive to wonder, but are rather directly inimical to it. Dominant fear is apt to find the motor expression of a rapid and headlong flight more congenial than the luxury of static wonder. No! The real *rôle* of fear in wonder is a subordinate part,—a standing in the background to lend to the

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<sup>58</sup> Sully, *op. cit.*, p. 523.



emotion richness and piercing vividness, or a lurking, fascinating possibility of danger. Not the shock itself, but the suspense of insecurity, of an immediate peril, of shock impending, is fear's contribution to wonder. And in the higher cases, where to an object more impressive there answers a feeling of sublimity, this contributive fear becomes awe, and promotes the religious ecstasy of a Jacob at Bethel.

A sort of criterion of the amount of fear proper to a state of wonder or marvel is furnished by the presence or absence of pleasure derived from the fascination of fear. Too great an impression of fear is signalized by pain. Indeed, the pleasurable characteristics of wondering are divided, probably, between the peculiar attraction of the fearful and the sublimer gratification to be drawn from moving in the ideal freedom of the marvellous; though over and above these two there is to be mentioned, of course, that usual glamor of excitement that accompanies vivid activity of any mental or motor process. Certainly these three categories cover the field of wonder-pleasure. Running through them all, a special aspect no more of one than of another, is that sense of self-gratulation, that self-*avertissement* we have already noticed in connection with the activity of the imagination.<sup>59</sup> To be thrilling with hippogriffs and wishing-mats, or with messages from the dead, or with the miracle of the oil of St. Walburga,<sup>60</sup> or with the visions of Böhme, or with the rending of the veil and opening of graves at the Passion of Golgotha,—do not such experiences open outward the door of these too earthly circumstances of ours and bring child or gray-beard, pagan or Christian, upon the threshold of that richer life, that grander power, which we all feel latent within us because we seldom are what we can be, seldom live to our full force, never realize our dreams of what we are and could be? We are dulled by the ordinary; the usual blunts our imagination by making us indifferent to what we see daily: but when the fascination of a subtle fear rouses us to nervous tension, or when the impingement of the unusual, of the marvellous, becomes the magic philter of a limitless freedom, do we not always feel that

<sup>59</sup> See above, p. 86.

<sup>60</sup> See Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, London 1902, pp. 298, 391.

at last we are becoming individual, above the crushing and demagnetizing forces of the commonplace?

The relation of fear to the fourth of the six typical cases should be noticed. In that case, it will be remembered, rarity, or improbability, persists, and no explanation is given: continuous companionship with the weird beauty and strange influence of Hawthorne's Beatrice,<sup>61</sup> no explanation being vouchsafed, results in the gradual diminution of the initial marvel. But if the marvel—or the wonder, in the case of mere rarity being substituted for the improbable or impossible—if the marvel be attended with a fear that is lasting in character, this process of diminution may be checked, or even converted into the exact opposite,—the exaggeration of marvel. One of the best possible examples is Defoe's picture of Crusoe's state of mind after his discovery of the single, mysterious footprint on the sand of the lonely island. Fear of assault at any moment kept the wonder of that footprint vividly and continually before Crusoe's mind.

Thus, from whatever vantage we regard wonder, it reveals itself as extending no further into human weakness and ignorance on the one hand, than into the hopes and longings of the race on the other. If we choose our approach from the "disadaptation" of surprise, we either find the suddenness of physical shock passing into a wonder of the lesser kind, the power of which is gone as soon as ignorance of the cause is dissipated; or, where the surprise is occasioned by the unusual, and so involves a mental discrimination, we detect a passing into a wonder of which the power varies according to six cases when the unusualness is mere rarity, or rises to the marvellous when improbability and impossibility are the contents of the unusual.<sup>62</sup> Again, coming into these processes, sometimes earlier, sometimes later, is curiosity,—the attempt, peculiarly motor and teleological, at adaptation. But, baffled, it exchanges its effort at a positive assimilation for the best that wonder can afford,—a sort of negative accommodation. But where the mind recognizes instantaneously that

<sup>61</sup> See above, p. 72.

<sup>62</sup> For fear of misunderstanding we must insist again that suddenness and rarity are in the majority of cases co-existent. They are separated only for the purpose of analysis.

there is no probable or possible solution, there is present immediately the acme of wonder, marvelling. Nor should the similarity of these states of intenser wonder on the one hand, to those of astonishment or amazement on the other, be the subject of confusion; the difference, often hard to detect, lies between the paralysis-like cessation of function in the latter, and the puzzled, dubitative, indecisive action of the former. But with the improbable still another element comes to view—the necessity of belief—which in turn opens up the realms of imagination and ideal freedom. Fear, with its fascination and intensifying power, brings still another facet into play, and suggests the pleasurable aspects of wonder. With these higher reaches of subject and stimulus, the marvellous proper, aided by the freedom of imagination, and supported by an idealistic belief, makes its climactic appearance in the field of literature. The imaginative and idealistic functions have always marked that field for their own exercise; it is now clearly seen to be also the field that preëminently and distinctively affords to the marvellous the peculiar conditions necessary to its growth. When wonders become too idealized for the crowd, or too unreal for the materialist, they still find in literature an hospitable welcome at the hands of the innumerable company of marvels long since domiciled there, and, at recurring intervals, still regnant there. And with every changing condition the colors of human significance vary from the duller ones that accompany the familiar eases of every-day wonder—the brief, winged moment of sudden stimulus and pausing ignorance—to the flash of gold and veil of purple that envelop the ecstatic vision of seer and mystic.

This description gives us certain more or less logical methods of differentiating the various eases of wonder, and also the various steps which lead from common wonder to the superlative case of the marvellous. A certain artificiality of division in our analysis and classification cannot be helped; nor is it possible to declare the exact formation of wonder. These points of view have shown us constituent elements and suggested certain broad classes; but the very come-and-go character of them all renders it entirely beyond our power to prescribe the exact proportion in which they make up what is called wonder or marvel.

Each case is a case to itself,—some with more of this and less of that ingredient; some omitting this to the same extent that they exaggerate that element; some involving one order of sequence of elements, others another. The description is a striking justification of Wundt's words: "The more composite a psychical process, the more variable will be its single concrete manifestations."<sup>63</sup>

Finally, to close our summary and comment, it will be noted that a detailed description of wondering has not only resulted in presenting for the emotion the same width and variety of field that was found to be indicated by the popular use and definition of the word (which was to be expected), but has also suggested, by the marking out of a regular and natural gradation from the simplest to the sublimest cases of wonder, the correctness of our intuition that the history of words contains here a testimony to the common origin psychologically of two sets of phenomena—the rare but entirely possible on the one hand, and the prodigious, the hyper-physical, on the other—which have come in the course of civilization to be regarded as not only widely different, but also diametrically and significantly opposed in origin.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Wundt, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>64</sup> See above, p. 13.

### CHAPTER III.

#### WONDER IN PRIMITIVE MIND, CUSTOM, AND BELIEF.

What is wonderful to the primitive?—Difficulties in answering—Subjective difficulty—Unreliability of data—General description of primitive mind, custom, and belief—Preliminary difficulties and objections—Vierkandt's picture of primitive mind and belief—Points, in primitive conditions, making *against* wonder: (*a*) no conception of unexceptional regularity; (*b*) matter-of-fact character of belief in spirits who cause rarities; (*c*) no impossibility possible to primitive consciousness; (*d*) primitive curiosity not favorable to wonder; (*e*) primitive belief and imagination not favorable to wonder; (*f*) magic as 'scientific'; (*g*) animism—Points, in primitive conditions, making *for* wonder: (*a*) segregated nature of gods; (*b*) of priest; (*c*) of magician; (*d*) of magic as 'magical'; (*e*) of taboo; (*f*) exaggeration—Summary.

In turning to the beginnings of wonder in primitive culture, no difficulty need be experienced in collecting cases that to a modern sophisticated standard of the usual and possible will seem marvellous. Savage custom and belief are full of such. But a difficulty of very real and almost insurmountable magnitude confronts the student who would know just how far these cases appear wonderful to the savage himself. Between our judgment and his there exists a gap as great as that between the architecture of a steel-frame fireproof office building and the slight inflammable *hogan* of a Navajo. Many a detail of his daily life, undertaken by the savage in the torrid regions of Queensland, or in the arctic wastes of Alaska, with the *sang froid* of a broker reaching for his telephone, appears as strange to us as would the "long-talk" of the broker's instrument to the savage. In their customs of making rain or sunshine, and laying or raising the wind, for instance, the members of savage society consider themselves endowed with powers we should regard as supernatural:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 2d ed., London 1900, I, 81-128. Cf. also Jevons, *Introd. to the Hist. of Relig.*, 2d ed., London 1902, p. 16.

but their ignorance of natural law and human limitation never for a moment permits them any sense of wonder, and, to use the words of Lewes when he speaks of the ready acceptance by simple minds of illusory hypotheses, "marvels are not marvellous to them, for ignorance does not marvel."<sup>2</sup> It is no slight matter, therefore, to be on guard against easily assuming that even the wildest vagaries of primitive mind are *bona fide* cases of wonder from the original point of view. The difficulty is of course a subjective one. That is acknowledged at once.

Moreover, the savage himself is not present at the examination; only his beliefs and customs as reported by more or less trustworthy travelers, missionaries, and ethnologists, are in evidence. Nor has the present writer had any greater experience with savage life than what, meagre enough, might be picked up in several summers spent with Indians on the Navajo and Ute reservations in southern Colorado. The sum of that experience represents but little beyond a full recognition of the constant difficulty and error to which a foreigner's observation of savage traits is liable because of the stubborn reticence or crafty subterfuge of the native. The amount of absolutely false evidence submitted by zealous but unskilled travelers or prejudiced missionaries, is a byword of every ethnological treatise. Truly, between the subjective nature of the problem and the drawbacks of untrustworthy evidence, the difficulty seems almost invincible.

This second difficulty will be met in due time by a careful selection of examples from books by professed and fully trained ethnologists. Within the last ten years there has been, fortunately, a great increase in such material. But an attempt has also been made to pave a way out of the first vexation. The principles established in the previous chapter are in part the required solution. There the description of wondering as we ourselves experience it puts into our hands a very real standard to aid us in the subjective puzzle. Thus, in view of that standard, we must now note and emphasize the fact that the control of sun and rain, to take the same illustration, appears no *unusual* power to our savage; it involves nothing of *inexplicable suddenness*, nothing of mysterious *rarity*, nothing of *impossibility*. It is, on the con-

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<sup>2</sup> G. H. Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind*, 3d ed., London 1874, I, 337.

trary, a *usual* occurrence, a custom, the habit of each individual. Therefore, no sense of the marvellous is present to the performer. Again, any Bushman hunter who finds himself returning to camp late in the afternoon puts a lump of earth in the crotch of a tree to retard the sun's decline.<sup>3</sup> There is here, say those who have observed such acts, no sense of performing a wonderful deed; but our own examination into the processes of wondering would have told us that immediately. The testimony of the observer is only corroboration,—proof of the correctness of our principle. Of course the application of the principles here, rests upon a hidden premise, but one that requires bare mention in order to win immediate acquiescence,—the premise that the primitive mind works in the same fashion as the civilized mind. It is easy to cite agreement with this obvious fact. Professor Tylor writes: "If any one holds that human thought and action were worked out in primæval times according to laws essentially other than those of the modern world, it is for him to prove by valid evidence this anomalous state of things, otherwise the doctrine of permanent principle will hold good, as in astronomy or geology."<sup>4</sup> Professor Brinton devotes several pages to the matter, speaks of the "cardinal and basic truth of the unity of action of man's intelligence,"<sup>5</sup> and is at pains to cite Granger,<sup>6</sup> Post,<sup>7</sup> Hartland,<sup>8</sup> Buchmann,<sup>9</sup> Honegger,<sup>10</sup> and Bastian,<sup>11</sup> to the same effect. Spencer goes into the matter at length in his *Principles of Sociology*,<sup>12</sup> and Principal Jevons treats of it most conscientiously.<sup>13</sup>

With this almost axiomatic truth once granted, there can be no objection to applying our general principles of wonder to

<sup>3</sup> E. M. Curr, *The Australian Race*, I, 50.

<sup>4</sup> E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 4th ed., London 1903, I, 33.

<sup>5</sup> D. G. Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, New York 1899, pp. 6-10.

<sup>6</sup> Granger, *The Worship of the Romans*, p. vii.

<sup>7</sup> A. H. Post, *Grundriss der ethnologischen Jurisprudenz*, Bd. i, s. 4.

<sup>8</sup> S. Hartland, *The Science of Fairy Tales*, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Buchmann, *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie*, Bd. xi, s. 124.

<sup>10</sup> J. J. Honegger, *Allgemeine Culturgeschichte*, Bd. 1, s. 332.

<sup>11</sup> Bastian, *Grundzüge der Ethnologie*, s. 73.

<sup>12</sup> H. Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, § 52.

<sup>13</sup> Jevons, *op. cit.*, Chap. IV.

primitive culture. Ignorance, indeed, to recur to Lewes' phrase, cannot marvel at what is not known to be unusual or impossible; but ignorance is a relative matter, and as soon as there is any mental development there arises *per se* the possibility of wonder. In order, however, to apply our principles, we must know something of the general character of the primitive mind, of its approximate stage of knowledge and mental complexity; something of its general attitude toward its environment as expressed in customs and beliefs. Otherwise, the usual could not be separated from the unusual; nor could we determine at what point in early consciousness the impossible takes its rise. It is proposed, therefore, to preface the account of actual cases of primitive wonder by a brief, general survey of the mental and emotional characteristics, and most important traits of custom and belief, that are universally found to distinguish primitive society. Such a task might appear one of supererogation in view of all that has been said upon this fascinating subject by Tylor, Lang, Spencer, Frazer, and a multitude of others both at home and abroad, were it not such an important step in the present line of argument. Moreover, in summarizing the observations of the ethnologists and folk-psychologists upon these general points, it will be possible to focus all the material upon the one particular point of our inquiry; and thus, when we are ready to touch upon the actual cases of wonder, there will be present not only a body of general knowledge about customs and beliefs, to give us a standard for separating the usual from the unusual, but also a certain familiarity with the possible extent and chief directions of the wondering activity in the savage's mind. Our *a posteriori* standard will be supplemented by the possibility of *a priori* reasoning.

At the outset of such a survey, one general objection, with several aspects, becoming more and more serious of late, must be engaged. Perhaps the learned have created a new mythological hero, and named him Primitive Man! Let us, therefore, they say, confine ourselves to savage and barbaric men, to actual cases, and leave generalization aside! Who ever, it is objected, saw a primitive man? What is this *primitive* that you all talk about? Where is he, or when did he live?" "Primitive," answers Professor Brinton, "to the ethnologist means the earliest of a given race or



tribe of whom he has trusty information. It has reference to a stage of culture, rather than to time."<sup>14</sup> Again, Professor Dewey very wisely voices a further objection against that ethnological method which throws together under a single classification data drawn from societies in widely differing stages of development.<sup>15</sup> Finally, it must always be remembered that "specialized as they are in correspondence with our thoughts, our words do not represent truly the thoughts of the savage; and often entirely misrepresent them."<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the whole difficulty of presenting a general picture of primitive cultural conditions may be compared with the attempts of moderns to epitomize the natural characteristics of their own or of a foreign people. Bryce's *American Commonwealth*, the efforts of Dickens, Arnold, or Max O'Rell at national and racial portraiture, or the famous essay of Renan upon the Semites, afford familiar examples of the mingled success wholly unknown to the early savage, or else, in their equivalents, and shortcomings of such work. How much more open to mistake is the subject of primitive life,—with its distance, though it may be less complex; with the danger of too great generalization from data of unlike strata, though the difference may be less than between modern strata; with the perpetual difficulty of appreciation and expression due to the fact that our very words are either quite differently understood by him! In spite of all these objections, however, the actual observations of tribes here and hordes there are seen upon a careful scrutiny plainly to reveal certain great tendencies; and these tendencies of character and custom may be combined to present a sort of composite of so-called primitive culture. Not any one actual, individual case, but the predominating *tendency* of a multitude of cases toward this or that character or custom, is all that a self-conscious history or description of peoples can hope to give. There were romantic spirits in the days of Pope and Swift, of Addison and Dryden—plenty of them; but the predominating tendency was nevertheless toward an artificial classicism: there are keen, reflective, reasoning minds among the Botoendo or even the Veddahs; but the predominating

<sup>14</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Dewey, J., *Interpretation of Savage Mind* (*Psychological Review*, Vol. IX, No. 3, p. 217, May, 1902).

<sup>16</sup> Spencer, *Op. cit.*, § 116.

mental tendency is one of sluggishness and stupidity. It is these tendencies, then, let it be repeated, that are here combined to form a typical picture of savage life.

Vierkandt<sup>17</sup> has summarized the attempts made by Rémusat, Gustav d'Eichthal, Karl von den Steinen, Klemms, Lippert, Peschel, Bagehot, Ratzel, and Spencer to differentiate *Kulturvölker* and *Naturvölker*. His own account of the mythological mode of thinking has been rendered in the following brief: "Subjectively considered, the presence of contradictions is to be noted, although there is a sort of logical coherence if certain peculiar premises are granted. The primary difference between this degree of thinking and the scientific lies, then, in a difference of premises, which is found negatively in the absence of the conception of unexceptional regularity, positively in the belief in spiritual beings whose actions cannot be predicted by calculation and whose motives are whimsical. From the narrowness of consciousness and the overwhelming power of the mechanism of association it follows: (a) that consciousness abides by that which is perceived by the senses. There is a lack of power to understand anything at all abstract, hence all 'becoming,' which is more abstract than objects. Thus, also, it is impossible to conceive of 'spirit' aside from an objective entity. (b) That everywhere there is a joining of thoughts according to purely external association. Consequently there is lacking a proper causal conception, which has its starting point in the conformity of all phenomena to law. Objectively, the following points are to be emphasized: (a) propensity to personification; (b) the spiritual as material; (c) processes are transformed into objects, and then often personified, as sickness, disease, etc.; (d) the cause of a thing is never sought inside itself, but always externally, as death; (e) there is no becoming and growing from within, but only an external origin—"once upon a time"—no continuity, but intermittent activity; (f) the whole has the properties of the parts, and *vice versa*; (g) similar things have similar properties; (h) things that originally went together, but were later separated, are still regarded as a connected whole. The entire

<sup>17</sup> Vierkandt, A., *Naturvölker und Kulturvölker*, Leipzig 1896, p. 1 ff.

method of thought clearly rests upon the basis of mere objective perception,—the world consisting of a collection of bodily things, each body an independent being and homogeneous whole, with unchangeable characteristics, but with the power of divisibility. So there is no idea of inner causation or gradual evolution, but only of personal causation, and the metamorphosis of one body into another.”<sup>18</sup>

We may now pause before this picture of tendencies for the purpose of comment and interpretation in behalf of wonder. It should be noted, first of all, that primitive thought is not made too simple. Our search for literary beginnings does not involve a genetic study of mind; it carries us back only to a stage of consciousness that is, relatively speaking, highly developed,—as high in the scale of consciousness, perhaps, as the human species is in the organic scale. And the long line of evolution before that stage, the long line of progenitors of our articulate, verse-making, ritual-dancing savage, gives indeed to the stage we are considering a *de facto* jejune and conservative condition of affairs and customs, and, therefore, of ideas. The tyrannical force of complex customs in totem, marriage, and religious ceremonies is a matter of too common remark to require illustration here. In fact, as Professor Baldwin says, “the relative force of convention, slavish imitation, worship of custom, seems to have some relation to the degree of development of a people.”<sup>19</sup> Primitive belief and literature are not a sort of sudden, pre-historic Elizabethan efflorescence; they are the outgrowth of an immemorial past, of a development slow, monotonous, laborious, and uninspired,—do not rise unannounced in an age of great leavening and mental freedom, but make their gradual appearance in the midst of conservatism, custom, and cast-iron habit. Primitive mind is not synonymous with a world-freshness, with a dawning inspiration and spontaneity of invention. The *Weltanschauung* of a people in that stage is far more fixed by time and custom than the religious belief of a New England Puritan. There is not that division of labor and specialization of production that in more

<sup>18</sup> For this summary I am indebted to an unpublished article by Professor Max Margolis. For the original, see Vierkandt, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-258.

<sup>19</sup> Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

advanced communities produce a mental variety to match the economic differentiation. All the conditions of their life tend toward quiescence and uniformity. There is no rapid transit and no knowledge of various climates and continents, customs and peoples, to stir the savage mind; no "European event"—no crusades—to begin a new life of state and thought. And yet, in spite of all this, we of a self-conscious, critical, introspective age, in looking back at the productions and characteristics of an early era of culture, experience at the sight a sensation of novelty, simplicity, spontaneity, invention: the things of that age are all so far removed from the sophistication of the present! The contrast is strongly evident to our imagination. But we then proceed to attribute to that primitive age as its own characteristics the very sensations we have experienced in contemplating it. This is as fallacious and unscientific as it is subjective. Primitive simplicity is not nearly so simple as we would have it; nor primitive belief so free, or primitive spontaneity so spontaneous, as they seem.

In all the activities that have to do with totemic ceremonies, totemic legends, marriage and initiation and *intichiuma* rites, *churinga*, magic, fetish-worship, and the like, we have the witnesses of a mental reaction upon the external world that is distinctly over and above the mere physical demands for food and drink and shelter. Moreover, these activities, especially in their sacred and secret aspects, occupy an extremely large and serious position in primitive life.<sup>20</sup> We are not to pre-suppose, then, for purposes of wonder, a total lack of phronemic development, or even a very great lack. Centers of complex association and inference, of memory-store with a strongly habituated action (for all these rites are, as we have said, matters of cast-iron custom), are to be granted.

The gap between the modern and the savage intellect lies supremely in what Vierkandt calls the premises. There is no conception of unexceptional regularity, says Vierkandt. That there is no conscious concept I am disposed to agree; but that there is no perception of irregularity in experience is quite

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, New York 1904, pp. 33, 34, 249 ff.

another thing. Unexceptional regularity in the action of the laws of nature is something that all civilized peoples are as yet by no means ready to grant; and savant as well as tyro often finds himself marvelling: but exceptions in experience—rarities, unusual happenings and forms—are as frequently present to the savage as to the citizen,—perhaps far more so. That these latter upon approaching the centers of stored experience will produce surprise, is a statement that needs no extended proof; for we have already noticed the simple and primitive character of surprise. If beasts, creatures lower in the organic scale than man, experience surprise at an interruption of their habitual reactions, it follows necessarily that primitive man is capable of the same feeling. The assumed stoicism of indifference to surprise with which the savage wraps himself is entirely another affair (as is also the rational surprise mentioned by Spencer)<sup>21</sup> and is a sign in itself that his psychic life is subject to very high and complex experiences of surprise. The real question is whether his surprise can pass into wonder. All the conditions are present,—the developed mental center and the reporting facilities. Is there in the make-up of the savage anything to prevent the natural progress to wonder?

There are facts of a character to prevent that progress. In the first place, wonder as a well-established state involves, as we have seen, a certain duration of attention. It is notorious that the mind of the savage, like that of the child, is distinguished by a reluctance to fix its attention for any protracted period upon any single problem that is not immediately and concretely connected with food-supply or some other equally urgent necessity.<sup>22</sup> The ease with which the attention of a child or a savage can be diverted, the positive pain attending the attempt at severe mental application, are matters not so remote from our own adult experience that we can fail to appreciate their naturalness in the mind untrained by long, assiduous application. Spencer presents the evidence thus:

“A passage which Sir John Lubbock quotes from Mr. Sproat’s account of the Ahts may be taken as descriptive of the average state: ‘The native mind, to an educated man, seems generally to be asleep. . . . On his

<sup>21</sup> Spencer, *op. cit.*, § 45.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Vierkandt, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

attention being fully aroused, he often shows much quickness in reply and ingenuity in argument. But a short conversation wearies him, particularly if questions are asked that require efforts of thought or memory on his part. The mind of the savage then appears to rock to and fro out of mere weakness.' Spix and Martius tell us of the Brazilian Indians that 'scarcely has one begun to question him about his language, when he grows impatient, complains of headache, and shows that he is unable to bear the exertion'; and according to Mr. Bates, 'it is difficult to get at their notions on subjects that require a little abstract thought.' When the Abipones 'are unable to comprehend anything at first sight, they soon grow weary of examining it, and cry—What is it after all?' It is the same with Negroes. Burton says of the East Africans, 'ten minutes sufficed to weary out the most intellectual,' when questioned about their system of numbers. And even of so comparatively superior a race as the Malagasy, it is remarked that they 'do not seem to possess the qualities of mind requisite for close and continued thought.'"<sup>23</sup>

In the second place, the other premise mentioned by Vierkandt interferes to change the processes of wondering as we are familiar with them. The "belief in the influence of spiritual beings whose actions cannot be predicted by calculation and whose motives are whimsical,"<sup>24</sup> causes a further interruption of the progress to wonder. What happens objectively is this: the rarity is immediately explained by reference to personal, spiritual causation. What takes place subjectively is the immediate association of the rarity with the second premise. The process, moreover, is perfectly logical: spirits produce all strange things; this is a strange thing; the spirits have produced it. The explanation is complete. The rarity, however, still exists; but it is assimilated to a great class of rarities—those that are the insignia of spiritual presences—and therefore any slight sense of wonder that might have crept in is doomed to speedy extinction. The experience thus resolves itself into the second of the six cases of rarity and explanation;<sup>25</sup> and the result here is only more precipitate than that already predicted,—a fading vividness of wonder. Moreover, the belief in these spiritual influences, if it is so great as to amount to a universal premise, is of that full and perfect nature which is hardly consonant with wonder.<sup>26</sup> Spirits, to such belief, are matters of fact; and their doings, also,

<sup>23</sup> Spence, *op. cit.*, § 43.

<sup>24</sup> See above, p. 98.

<sup>25</sup> See above, p. 63.

<sup>26</sup> See above, pp. 79-80.

are matters of fact, which, while easily provocative of surprise, even of astonishment, are scarcely conducive to wonder, even if the savage's powers be equal to the concentration of attention necessary to it. Unless some other tendency intervenes there seems here but small chance of wondering.

Still less opportunity for marvelling! For if there is no conception of unexceptional regularity, and the belief in spiritual powers is so absolute as to render them matters of fact, primitive consciousness can conceive of nothing as impossible. Consequently, the apotheosis of wonder, the marvellous, which rests upon a belief in the impossible, is not to be expected within the realm of early psychic experiences. Nor will a more careful regard of the nature of the conception of unexceptional regularity bring any more encouraging results. It might be remarked, for instance, that this conception is a splendid example of the abstraction that is formed from the wearing down of a multiplicity of concrete experiences, of that "true abstraction" that is "not a singling out; it is rather a paring down, a wearing off, an erosion, due to the progress in adjustment which the organ has been able to effect."<sup>27</sup> Now, it might be continued, although the abstract conception of regularity may not yet be formed, still, among the concrete experiences that are on their way to a reduction to such an abstraction, there must be acted out physically again and again experiences that are tending in a contrary direction because they are interruptions of regularity; and the opposition between these interruptions and ordinary experiences must be felt, if not conceived, as irregular and impossible. For instance, a man who can do something no other man can do, or any other similar anomaly in an order of experience established by every-day motor and sensory activity, must be felt at once as far transcending in power what the individual percipient and his fellows can do or are in the habit of experiencing.<sup>28</sup> From such, it would be maintained, an incipient sense of the

<sup>27</sup> Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Jevons on the surprise resulting from the interruption of expectation or "the belief that what has once happened will in similar circumstances happen again" (*op. cit.*, pp. 17 ff.). The norm of experiential regularity in the life of the primitive is thus contrasted with the animistic norm: "In their higher generalizations, in what Powell calls their 'sophiology,' it appears that the primitive peoples are guided by animistic norms; they

marvellous might be expected. But, though the observations are undoubtedly correct, the inference is erroneous. Once given such a case of irregular experience, it is open immediately to the operations of spiritual explanation and loss of wonder just traced in the two previous paragraphs; what seemed to be a new condition resolves itself at once into the former case. Equally futile, then, with that of wonder, is the quest of the marvellous in primitive mind, unless, as was stipulated before, some other tendency intervenes to modify the operation of the tendencies here represented as premises.

In order better to check the results so far established it will be wise to examine the testimony as to the general trend of curiosity, belief, and imagination among the ruder peoples. About curiosity there has been a difference of opinion among authors. Spencer,<sup>29</sup> while admitting the presence of strong curiosity among the higher Polynesians, maintains that the lowest mental state is characterized by "an absence of desire for information

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make up their cosmological schemes, and the like, in terms of personal or quasi-personal activity, and the whole is thrown into something of a dramatic form. Through the early cosmological lore runs a dramatic consistency which imputes something in the way of initiative and propensity to the phenomena that are to be accounted for. But this dramatization of the facts, the accounting for phenomena in terms of spiritual or quasi-spiritual initiative, is by no means the whole case of primitive men's systematic knowledge of facts. Their theories are not all of the nature of dramatic legend, myth, or animistic life-history, although the broader and more picturesque generalizations may take that form. There always runs along by the side of these dramaturgic life-histories, and underlying them, an obscure system of generalizations in terms of matter-of-fact. The system of matter-of-fact generalizations, or theories, is obscurer than the dramatic generalizations only in the sense that it is left in the background as being less picturesque and of less vital interest, not in the sense of being less familiar, less adequately apprehended, or less secure. The peoples of the lower cultures 'know' that the broad scheme of things is to be explained in terms of creation, perhaps of procreation, gestation, birth, growth, life and initiative; and these matters engross the attention and stimulate speculation. But they know equally well the matter of fact that water will run down hill, that two stones are heavier than one of them, that an edge-tool will cut softer substances, that two things may be tied together with a string, that a pointed stick may be stuck in the ground, and the like. There is no range of knowledge that is held more securely by any people than such matters of fact; and these are generalizations from experience; they are theoretical knowledge, and they are a matter of course. They underlie the dramatical generalizations of the broad scheme of things, and are so employed in the speculations of the myth-makers and the learned."—Veblen, T., "The Evolution of the Scientific Point of View," in *The University of California Chronicle*, Vol. X, No. 4, pp. 403-404 (Oct., 1908).

<sup>29</sup> Spencer, *Op. cit.*, § 46.



about new things.” Dr. Lang<sup>30</sup> will not admit that even the lower races are at fault in this respect, and proceeds to demolish Spence’s evidence. He further claims that mythology is the result of the inquisitive turn of mind which universally belongs to savage races. Professor Giddings comes at the question comparatively, from the point of view of the analogy supposed to exist between the minds of children and savages, and, discovering a relation between the child’s curiosity and his naming activity, would by analogy throw curiosity as far back as the practice by primitive man of “his newly acquired and wonderful faculty of speech.”<sup>31</sup> The wide variety of opinion indicated by these three references might perhaps have been avoided if the term curiosity had been carefully defined in its application to those degrees of intelligence that are lower than those amongst which the term is common. Here, as in the early stages of the development of every body of knowledge, much confusion arises through the use, where exact information is to be conveyed, of popular and loosely defined phrases. If by curiosity there is meant the mere attempt at closer, sensuous familiarity with a novel object, the tentative rubbing and mouthing and fingering of the strange thing, it will be immediately admitted that such curiosity is to be attributed not only to savages, but also, and most indubitably, to the lower animals. The craning necks of fowls, the advancing and retreating movements of domestic or wild animals, are too familiar to allow of any disagreement here. It is to this class of activities that we have already seen Professor James referring in these words: “Some such susceptibility for being excited . . . by the mere novelty, as such, of any movable feature of the environment must form the instinctive basis of all human curiosity.”<sup>32</sup> Nor is this desire sensuously to experience the new object a matter that ends with the development of a rational curiosity. The Sandwich Islanders examining Cook’s European equipments, exploring and stroking them, are to be compared to a civilized being involuntarily fingering things new to his experience. Whether or not there is in connection with

<sup>30</sup> Lang, A., *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, London 1899, I, 86 ff.

<sup>31</sup> Giddings, F. H., *The Principles of Sociology*, New York 1896, p. 227.

<sup>32</sup> James, W., *op. cit.*, II, 429.

this instinctive curiosity a state of blank suspense that might be called the physiological analogue of wonder, is, however, a matter with which we are not concerned. As already remarked, the genetic study of these matters is distinctly outside the present province of early mind; while wonder as it has been described in the last chapter is, so far as we are concerned, a matter distinctly dependent upon that long circuit of reaction that brings into play the cerebral and rational functions.

If, on the other hand, there is meant by curiosity a definite, reflective, ratiocinative progress, by which the novel object or experience is made to go through the gamut of analysis and comparison in order to be assigned to its proper place in the mental classification of phenomena, the task of answering yea or nay to the question of savage curiosity is more complicated, though by no means doubtful. The degree of reflection present in the individual is indeed the key to the whole mental difference between the uncivilized and civilized races; nor is there, perhaps, any way in which this can better be realized than by contrasting the environments into which the children of the respective races are born. A child of modern civilization is not only born into a world of a highly developed language, which is freighted with the reflection of centuries, and to which he immediately falls heir, but he also grows up in the midst of a world of thought-monuments,—of houses, fences, walks, roads, of steam-ears, newspapers, telegraph-poles, and books, of innumerable other embodied human thoughts, which take the place in his life that in the life of the savage's infant is occupied by the natural wilds of forest and plain, mountain and river. Churches and other institutions convey early to one mind a sense of the past; family records and histories of nations create him a miniature citizen long before the age of maturity; religious instruction makes a priest of him with eyes toward the future while still at his mother's knees; geographies make of him a cosmopolitan before he travels beyond his own village: to the other mind all these monuments and encouragements to reflection are present only in a degree so low as to appear abortive by comparison; while the wilds and dangers, the great, sheer, physical struggle with beast and tempest, the continual search, nomad-wise, for food and shelter, dominate his

wandering, precarious initiation into life.<sup>33</sup> But the beginnings of religion and history and government, of church, college, and state, are there,—in the tools and shelters of the stone-age, in the initiation ceremonies of the Australians, in their complex tribal and inter-tribal relationships, in their tales and mythologies. The contrast is tremendous; but there *is* something to contrast. Finally, corresponding to those rude beginnings, there is a rough mental classification of phenomena; and thus there is present the machinery for a reflection as crude mentally as the horde, or wigwam, or celt, is crude economically. Calculated only for daily needs are the implements of savage life; and corresponding only to daily activities is the reflection evidenced by peoples of the stone-age in culture. Spencer and Gillen say of the Central Australians: “their mental powers are simply developed along the lines which are of service to them in their daily life.”<sup>34</sup> For performing their sacred ceremonies they can give no clear reason: “the natives have no very definite idea in regard to this, merely saying that it pleases the Wollunqua when they are performed and displeases him when they are not.”<sup>35</sup>

A reflection as crude as this can hardly give rise to a rational, deliberative curiosity; and, indeed, upon turning to the testimonies of early travels, it is found that the curiosity evinced by the aborigines is uniformly lacking in the reflective quality. The experience of rarities and novelties is provocative of astonishment, or of the mere sensuous exploration of the novel object, as mentioned above. Cook tells of the surprise with which a New Zealand chief viewed the European's vessel, and of how impossible it was to fix his attention upon any object for a single moment; of the astonishment of the Matavians at seeing men on horseback; of the more than usual astonishment of the Sandwich Islanders upon coming aboard.<sup>36</sup> But the astonishment seems to have worn away without any access of reflection. Fifty years later Wilkes found among the same peoples, who had in the

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Letourneau, *La Psychologie Ethnique*, Paris 1901, p. 79.

<sup>34</sup> Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 30; cf., by same authors, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 46 ff.

<sup>35</sup> Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes, etc.*, p. 227.

<sup>36</sup> Kippis, A., *Narrative of the Voyages Performed by Capt. Cook*, New York 1858, pp. 173, 320, 337.

meantime come under the tutelage of the missionaries, a curiosity equally idle and in hardly any greater degree passing beyond the stupid stare of astonishment.<sup>37</sup> Of the equally simple inquisitiveness of the Dyaks a good illustration may be found in H. Ling Roth's account of the natives of Sarawak and Borneo.<sup>38</sup> At other times there appears a complete absence of curiosity of any kind;<sup>39</sup> so that the curious state of mind seems not only as idle and empty of reflection, but also as capricious, as with children.

On the other hand, the presence of teleological myths is usually taken as an indication of a reflective curiosity working upon its environment; and Dr. Lang bases his whole account of mythology upon the assumption of an early curiousness about the world. Tylor speaks of the savage's intellectual appetite and craving for reasons 'why.'<sup>40</sup> But readiness to ask questions does not mean a reflective and discriminating curiosity, even when the questions are about the origin and nature of the individual's environment. The savage's curiosity, like that of the child, is satisfied with the first answer that comes to hand, as Dr. Lang is at pains to point out;<sup>41</sup> and that answer is the answer of imagination. Here, indeed, a fact most important to the understanding of the primitive mind and its products becomes evident. When such a mind confronts a question of rarity, its reflection is identical with its imagination. A creative activity of mind, rather than a critical examination, is what constitutes primitive reflection, and makes of primitive science a realm of fairy-stories that contain the naïve and facile answering of the questions asked by a simple curiosity. Finally, it may be suggested that the inherent delight in the exercise of this free function of invention, that the universal love of story-telling, is quite as much at the basis of mythology as that tendency to ask questions about everything which is so often mistaken for a self-conscious and deliberative activity.

<sup>37</sup> Wilkes, C., *U. S. Exploring Expedition*, Philadelphia 1845, II, 8, 111, 127.

<sup>38</sup> H. Ling Roth, *The Natives of Sarawak and North Borneo*, London 1896, I, 68.

<sup>39</sup> Earl, G. W., *Papuans*, London 1853, p. 46; Kippis, *op. cit.*, pp. 35, 82, 95, 325; Cf. H. Ling Roth, *The Aborigines of Tasmania*, Halifax 1899, p. 42.

<sup>40</sup> Tylor, *op. cit.*, I, 368, 369.

<sup>41</sup> Lang, *op. cit.*, I, 51.

Thus, on the one hand, whatever there is of curiosity, simple, idle, capricious, and empty of any appreciable reflection (except, of course, in matters connected with the chase, where the savage's complete experience is always in the process of wearing down to ideas and reflection), is closely bound up with that stupid astonishment which, as we have seen, it is always difficult to distinguish from real wonder, and which is, at any rate, of little or no importance in our study, save as a frequent associate of wonder. On the other hand, the same curiosity, brought to bear upon the striking effects of natural environment, passes off into an imaginative activity which, so far as the deliberation and bafflement of reflection that make for wonder are concerned, promises no eventuation in that emotion.

Once more, then, the progress to wonder, this time from curiosity, is retarded by the absence of a sophisticated classification of phenomena under a conscious conception of natural law and order. But if a reflection rich in the store of analysis and synthesis of data is absent, has not imagination, it may be asked, lent another opportunity for wonder, aside from that which comes from curiosity working upon objective material? Has not a new wonder been born, even a marvel, the marvel of imagination working upon the unrealities of the mind's eye to produce that which has never been seen on land or sea?

This question introduces the matter of belief. Belief, because, perhaps, of its perduring primitiveness, shows better than almost any other mental trait the identity of processes in the minds of savage and citizen. Dr. Lang has assisted in exploding a fallacy long connected with the popular opinion of primitive character. To Europeans, he remarks, the mind of the savage and credulity have appeared almost synonymous, while in fact it is easy to show that incredulity is a marked characteristic of savages. Tales of Creation and the Fall brought them by the missionaries are received often with utter disbelief, as preposterous, and worthy only of ridicule.<sup>42</sup> Everything depends upon the authority under which the matter for credence is presented. Let the tradition of his own people present him with the absurdest

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<sup>42</sup> Lang, *op. cit.*, I, 92-93.

foolery,<sup>43</sup> or let those accredited with authority in the subject demand his confidence in wildest vagaries, and the implicit assent of the savage is immediately forthcoming. He is then the apotheosis of credulity.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, the very narrowness and irrationality of his faith under familiar authority render him equally and unreasonably impervious to contrary ideas when presented without such authority. That the early missionaries often achieved their ends is no proof to the contrary; but that this furnishes, rather, a case in point, may be seen if time is taken to reflect that the authority of these white strangers with new and terrible magical powers of slaying and traveling was indeed so high as to be god-like. The only wonder is that they ever failed. Incredulity must have been unfortunately only too strong for many an early devoted soul. The whole affair is in every way identical with the mingling of bigotry and utter credulity which is found among the unlearned to-day, and which would be a paradox were it not so clearly an inevitable combination.

In belief proper, distinguished from unreflective credulity by its interplay with doubt and conviction, the same general principles of authority tend to hold so long as the individual mind is absorbed in the communal. Moreover, progress in thinking for himself is provocative of hardly any other assured tendency in the savage, because, as we have just pointed out, reflection and imagination in the savage are one and the same. Nor is this imagination of a kind to widen the field of perceived differences, or open up the sense of various possibilities. It is not the active imagination of a sophisticated mind indulging in constructive discovery and analytical invention, but, as Vierkandt suggests, the principle of association dominating without challenge or hindrance the affairs of a narrow, unreflecting consciousness. Presentation in thought becomes equivalent to external reality; and sequence in images, whether by contiguity or similarity, is absolutely accepted as cause and effect. Thus, like influences like; and antecedence in time is the same as efficient cause.<sup>45</sup> There is no freedom of rare similarities and impossible

<sup>43</sup> "What the tribe believes, he believes, no matter what his senses tell him." Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> See, e.g., Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes, etc.*, p. 484, note 1.

<sup>45</sup> For example, see Frazer, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 9 ff; 49 ff; and below, p. 114.

contiguities, such as constitute the imagination of a modern poet, but an even and sluggish flow of habitual associations won directly from objective experience. What Tylor has to say about the similarity of a savage's fancy to that of a raving lunatic<sup>46</sup> applies rather to the error of the imagination and absoluteness of the delusion than to any characteristic of high and sensitive plasticity; to the implicitness of belief, in a word, rather than to the spontaneity of invention. To be sure, the higher races, some branches of the Polynesians in particular,<sup>47</sup> evince an astounding freedom of poetic image; but the lower peoples are quite as innocent of such powers as they are unconscious of their own lesser faculties.<sup>48</sup> Imagination is not imagination to them; it is fact. "There is no organized experience to produce hesitation. There is no doubt taking the shape—'This cannot be,' or—'that is impossible.' Consequently, a fancy once having got possession, retains possession, and becomes an accepted fact. If we always carry with us the remembrance of this attitude of mind, we shall see how apparently reasonable to savages are explanations of things which they make."<sup>49</sup> Or, to use Tylor's words: "Beholding the reflexion of his own mind like a child looking at itself in a glass, he humbly receives the teaching of his second self."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Tylor, *op. cit.*, I, 315.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Frazer, *op. cit.*, I, 140.

<sup>48</sup> The learned show more than usual uniformity of testimony in this matter. Jevons (*Introd. to the Hist. of Relig.*, Lon. 1902, p. 36) refers to the singularly sterile imagination of the savage. Tylor (*op. cit.*, II, 108) shows that spirits are personified causes, and not creatures of unbridled fancy. Tarde (*The Laws of Imitation*, New York 1903, p. 95) speaks of "a feeble, wayward imagination scattered here and there in the midst of a vast passive imitativeness," and quotes Sumner Maine's reference to Taylor to the same effect. Grosse (*Beginnings of Art*, New York 1897, p. 158) says: "Some historians of culture have ascribed to primitive man an excess of fancy. If he really possesses anything of the kind, it is doubly remarkable that he never exhibits even a trace of it in the productions of his representative art." Spencer (*op. cit.*, I, §§ 39, 47, and I, App. B., § 11) claims that primitive imagination is reminiscent, not constructive. Hirn (*Origins of Art*, Lon. 1900, pp. 168, 297) would do away with the "idea of a rich and creative imagination in primitive man," and notices instead his deficient powers of observation.

<sup>49</sup> Spencer, *op. cit.*, I, App. A.

<sup>50</sup> Tylor, *op. cit.*, II, 49. The savage's implicit trust in his own imaginings is well illustrated by that habit of mind in a child which is called "make-believe." It is easy to remember how real those fancies were in our own childhood; how the mind "saw" the things happen, while external reality was totally forgotten. The savage has comparatively little of that

For belief, then, whether in his own imaginings or in new presentations, everything depends upon the mental complexity of the individual,—the number of categories of experience that the subject for credence must satisfy. The less the number of such categories, the greater the rigidity of belief. That there is a mental complexity in the individuals we are dealing with, has already emphatically been stated. In view of that development, there cannot be on the part of the savage a mere blind acceptance of whatever is presented to his consciousness, of anything and everything claiming his attention. Far from that; and yet, when we speak comparatively, his intellectual capacity is after all a very small matter; and as such it gives evidence of itself in a rigidity of belief that is far from a negligible quantity in the present research. On the contrary, this rigidity is of extreme importance, as may be seen upon realizing its force and extent in actual primitive life. So implicit among the aborigines of Victoria is the belief in the powers of magical incantation that “men and women, who learned that it had been directed against them, have been known to pine away and die of fright.”<sup>51</sup> In New Zealand the belief in the fatal power of *tapu* is so great as to kill by mere suggestion the unlucky savage who incurs its malignity;<sup>52</sup> and similar cases are easily found in all parts of the world,—among the peasants in civilized countries as well as among the savages of the archipelagoes. Spencer and Gillen cite the case of a Kaitish man who believed that some of the evil magic of a pointing-stick had gone into his head. “The natives,” they write, “are people of the most wonderful imagination, and we thought at first it was going to affect him seriously; however we assured him that our medicine chest contained magic powerful

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external reality to forget: his “make-believe” endures, and there is no sophisticated parent to point out his mistakes. Spencer and Gillen (*Northern Tribes, etc.*, p. 252) give a good example of this in the case of the roots of trees which have forced their way down through the rock into the water beneath, and which the natives believe to be the whiskers of the Wollunqua snake who resides in the pool.

<sup>51</sup> Frazer, *op. cit.*, I, 13.—Quotes from E. M. Curr, *The Australian Race*, III, 547.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 321.—Quoted from *Old New Zealand, by a Pakcha Maori*, Lon. 1884, p. 96. See further in Frazer for other cases—also p. 60 for the same thing among European peasants. Cf. also E. Crawley, *The Mystic Rose*, Lon. 1902, p. 67; A. W. Howitt, *Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, Lon. 1904, pp. 373, 416.



enough to counteract the effect of all the *atnilingas* in the tribe, and gradually he recovered his equanimity.”<sup>53</sup> But the term imagination is here utterly misleading, and furnishes a good example of the looseness with which psychological terms are applied by even ethnological specialists. Rigidity of belief, rather than any liveliness of imagination proper, was the mental trait liable to produce an unfortunate outcome; and so understood the case is nothing but another example of the force and extent of the stereotyped aspect of narrowly circumscribed consciousness.

This belief even unto death, as it might be called, due as it is to the absence of “many ways of conceiving things,” and implying a corresponding density toward other ways of appreciation—possessing, in a word, both the positive and the negative characteristics of bigotry—is the adequate compliment of the perfect credulity under authority, and the equally perfect incredulity without authority, which were noticed above. And when to this belief and credulity, which approximate each other so closely that they seem hardly differentiated, there are added the other conditions of simplicity and paucity of imagination, and belief in that meagre imagination, such as it is, it is at once apparent that between mental sluggishness and stereotyped bigotry of conception there is small chance for wonder. These are indeed tendencies that point directly away from, rather than toward, that mental plasticity and sense of rarity that were found in the previous chapter to be the *sine qua non* of any wonder beyond mere stupid astonishment. There is no creation of a new wonder by feats of imagination, as seemed possible for a moment; there is the throttling of wonder by the readiness of credulity and the rigidity of belief; incredulity is so absolute as to eventuate in the sense of the ridiculous, not of wonder; there is little or nothing of the ebb and flow of doubt and speculation, which form the shifting outlines of the belief that, consonant with wonder, stops short of annihilating it with too absolute a credence.<sup>54</sup> The lower in the human scale the search is carried, the stronger become these inimical conditions and the further

<sup>53</sup> Spenceer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes, etc.*, pp. 462-463. Cf. Stoll, *Suggestion und Hypnotismus, etc.*, Leipzig 1904, p. 121.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. above, p. 80.

away we move from marvelling. Unless some other tendency appear to contravene these, there is as small chance for wonder from the side of belief and imagination as from the side of curiosity.

A word about Magic. A few paragraphs above, mention was made of the dominant powers of association in a narrow consciousness,—of how appearance in thought becomes equivalent to external reality.<sup>55</sup> It is the body of logical error, occasioned by this natural confusion of the subjective and the objective, and rendered concretely obvious in certain peculiar practices, that is meant by the term magic in this place. The regarding of antecedence and consequence in time as the same thing as cause and effect; the assumption, unconsciously the result of mental association by similarity, that like effects like,—that, in a word, “causal connection in thought is equivalent to causative connection in fact”:<sup>56</sup>—art magic, as Dr. Lang observes, is simply putting these erroneous principles into action.<sup>56</sup> Or, to quote Dr. Frazer, “A mistaken association of similar ideas produces imitative or mimetic magic; a mistaken association of contiguous ideas produces sympathetic magic in the narrower sense of the word.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, to give an example of the mimetic kind, the Bushmen light fires when they desire rain, with the idea that the black smoke clouds will attract black rain clouds. The Talus sacrifice black cattle for the same purpose.<sup>58</sup> Of sympathetic magic the readiest example is the superstition that ill may be worked to an individual by torturing either any refuse of his body, such as hair, skin or finger-nails, or anything that has been contiguous to his body, such as his coat or other part of his dress.<sup>59</sup> It is this sort of magic, magic in its simplest terms, that is considered here in its possible relation to wonder.

In the first place, and briefly, it is to be noted that magic can occupy no place of rarity in early consciousness, both because of

<sup>55</sup> See above, p. 110.

<sup>56</sup> Lang, *op. cit.*, I, 96.

<sup>57</sup> Frazer, *op. cit.*, I, 62.

<sup>58</sup> Lang, *op. cit.*, I, 99.

<sup>59</sup> For further examples, see Frazer as indicated above, note 45; or Jevons, *op. cit.*, Chap. IV.

the universality of its fundamental causes, which are found wherever there is mental association by similarity and contiguity, —and also because of its constant appearance in objective form and practice among all the individuals of primitive tribes or communities.<sup>60</sup> To us, indeed, the magical powers commonly arrogated to himself by each member of a tribe appear superhuman and ridiculous; but to the savage himself they are as much matters of fact as his physical powers,—as his *other* physical powers, to express what would be his own statement if he were capable of the abstraction. Instead of being the exercise of a rare and special prerogative of influencing the supernatural, or at least the superhuman, the practice of magic is in his consciousness the mere exertion of the perfectly well-known and common methods of his science. “His sympathetic magic is but one branch of his science, and is not different in kind from the rest”; magic is not “magical” to the savage.<sup>61</sup> There needs neither more words nor further proof immediately to lift the matter of simple magic from the demesne of wonder.

Can the same be shown of what Dr. Tylor calls “Animism”? Can the spirits spoken of by Vierkandt as beings “whose actions cannot be predicted by calculation and whose motives are whimsical,” be shown to be equally unproductive of marvelling?

It is impossible to approach this subject without defining what is meant by animism; for there has been a confusion of application that lays the content of the word open to question. Animism, as Dr. Lang remarks, is “(1) a sort of instinctive or unreasoned belief in universal animation, which Mr. Spencer calls ‘Animism’ and does not believe in; (2) the reasoned belief in separable and surviving souls of men (and in things), which Mr. Spencer believes in [and calls the Ghost-theory] and Mr. Tylor calls ‘Animism.’ ”<sup>62</sup> The former sort, based as it is upon a supposed lack of differentiation of the animate and inanimate, is

<sup>60</sup> See Frazer, *op. cit.*, I, 129, et passim; also I, 66, 72; cf. Brinton, *op. cit.*, p. 56; Crawley, *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 86; Lang, *Making of Relig.*, p. 49; *Journ. Am. Folk-Lore*, XVIII, 327; Lang, *Myth. Rit. and Relig.*, I, 85; Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 456.

<sup>61</sup> Jevons, *op. cit.*, pp. 27, 35. Cf. Brinton, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>62</sup> A. Lang, *The Making of Relig.*, 2d ed., London 1900, p. 53.

pretty thoroughly discredited by the observations, put forward by Van Ende and others, that even the lower animals make such a distinction.<sup>63</sup> The second sort, as defined by Dr. Tylor, is of a double nature, involving both spirits and gods. "It is habitually found," he says, "that the theory of Animism divides into two great dogmas, forming parts of one consistent doctrine; first, concerning souls of individual creatures, capable of continued existence after the death or destruction of the body; second, concerning other spirits, upward to the rank of powerful deities."<sup>64</sup> Whether these two dogmas should be taken together in the sense that the same spiritual conception extends throughout the series of souls, demons, and deities, while the conception of soul is the original one of the series;<sup>65</sup> or whether they should be separated, as Dr. Lang maintains, because of an independent development of the idea of deity, are questions we fortunately do not have to decide in the search for wonder. Nor is it necessary to regard the origin of the idea of spirits, whether it arises from metaphysical sources or from mistaken interpretation of dream, vision, hallucination, shadow, and the like. For us the ideas of both gods and souls are there—existent; and, though the origin of a belief may sometimes give to the student some dubious hint of its later subjective value, usually the present value in popular consciousness of a belief or rite is quite divorced from any appreciation of the exact nature of its origin. The evolution of religious belief is always marked by the loss to memory of the earlier and cruder stages. Since there is thus no call to join the ranks of either party of disputants, it cannot be interpreted as giving allegiance or countenance to the one or the other if here, for the sole sake of clearness in argument, the soul-spirit-demon side of Animism is regarded by itself, and the deity side postponed to another place. For the present then, only the former case is covered when the word Animism is used.

The extent, according to primitive belief, of the world of spirits and demons is practically boundless, as Dr. Frazer and others have most adequately shown. A few cases taken from

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<sup>63</sup> U. Van Ende, *Histoire Naturelle de la Croyance*, Paris 1887.

<sup>64</sup> Tylor, *op. cit.*, I, 426.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 109.

the *Golden Bough* will serve to recall emphatically the astonishing conditions. "Thus in regard to the aborigines of Australia we are told that 'the number of supernatural beings, feared if not loved, that they acknowledge is exceedingly great; for not only are the heavens peopled with such, but the whole face of the country swarms with them; every thicket, most watering-places, and all rocky places abound with evil spirits. In like manner, every natural phenomenon is believed to be the work of demons, none of which seem of a benign nature, one and all striving to do all imaginable mischief to the poor blackfellow.' 'The negro,' says another writer, 'is wont to regard the whole world around him as peopled with invisible beings, to whom he imputes every misfortune that happens to him, and from whose harmful influence he seeks to protect himself by all kinds of magic means.' . . . Speaking of the spirits which the Indians of Guiana attribute to all objects in nature, Mr. E. F. im Thurn observes that 'the whole world of the Indian swarms with these beings. If by a mighty mental effort we could for a moment revert to a similar mental position, we should find ourselves everywhere surrounded by a host of possible hurtful beings, so many in number that to describe them as innumerable would fall ridiculously short of the truth. It is not therefore wonderful that the Indian fears to move beyond the light of his camp-fire after dark. . . .; nor is it wonderful that occasionally the air around the settlement seems to the Indian to grow so full of beings, that a peaiman (sorcerer), who is supposed to have the power of temporarily driving them away, is employed to effect a general clearance of these beings, if only for a time.' . . . The Tahitians, when they were visited by Captain Cook, believed that 'sudden deaths and all other accidents are effected by the immediate action of some divinity (*sic*). If a man only stumble against a stone and hurt his toe, they impute it to an *Eatooa*; so that they may be literally said, agreeably to their system, to tread enchanted ground.' . . . [Among the Maori the spirits] 'were supposed to be so numerous as to surround the living in crowds [like mosquitoes] ever watching to inflict evil.' . . . In Bolang Mongondo, a district of Celebes, 'all calamities, great and small, of whatever kind and by whatever name they are called. that

befall men and animals, villages, gardens, and so forth, are attributed to evil or angry spirits. The superstition is indescribably great. The smallest wound, the least indisposition, the most trifling adversity in the field, at the fishing, on a journey or what not, is believed by the natives to be traceable to the anger of their ancestors.' . . . The Mantras, an aboriginal race of the Malay Peninsula, 'find or put a spirit everywhere, in the air they breathe, in the land they cultivate, in the forests they inhabit, in the trees they cut down, in the caves of the rocks. According to them, the demon is the cause of everything that turns out ill. . . .'<sup>66</sup>

The examples can be multiplied indefinitely. In this populous realm of superstition, what is the status of wonder and the wonderful? In the first place, it will be seen immediately that there are certain conditions that, according to our descriptive standard, are opposed to wonder. There is no rarity. Spirits are common, and extremely intimate in their intercourse with men. They hardly can be said to constitute 'another world,' so entirely is their activity in this. They are as common as the diseases and misfortunes they cause; and like those experiences they are calamities,—not wonders. As personifications of disease they enjoy the very real, and equally common, characteristics of the diseases themselves. It has already been observed<sup>67</sup> that rarities in experience lose their wonder because of their instantaneous explanation by reference to this great and common premise of spiritual influence: the further observation may now be made that their very commonness tends to keep the spirits themselves from taking on the air of the wonderful. Furthermore, the materialistic conception of spirits tends to make wonder even more remote. Associated with them is nothing of the modern idealistic and tenuous character of a supernatural, transcendent, unembodied power; instead, either they are so vaguely conceived as to be hardly more than 'influences,'<sup>68</sup> or else no distinction is made between them and persons. The methods adopted to expel spirits conclusively show the naïve materialism of the savage.

<sup>66</sup> Frazer, *op. cit.*, III, 41 ff.

<sup>67</sup> See above, p. 102.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Crawley, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

Screaming and beating the air with sticks, pelting with stones, stalking an infected village and clearing it of demons by assault, pulling the evil spirits down from the roof by ropes, shutting gates against them, scaring away fever-demons by terrific noise and war-like preparations, charging them with squadrons of elephants,<sup>69</sup>—these, and many other physical means of expulsion, can point to nothing else than a belief that spirits have bodies and functions, powers and susceptibilities, like those of the men whom they persecute. If any further proof is needed, the world-wide primitive conception of soul as a material entity can be cited.<sup>70</sup> Again, in the universal fear evinced toward these malignant spirits lies another condition incompatible with wonder. Practically all the cases cited by Dr. Frazer insist upon the dread with which the savage regards the cruel propensities of the demon hosts. Personified causes of misfortunes as they are, they are hated as the misfortunes are feared. In sickness and pain, fear and hatred usurp the attention; and when the responsibility for suffering can be placed upon concrete shoulders, no time is lost in wondering at the matter. Pain demands alleviation; the offenders' shoulders must be chastised. Nothing of awe, which goes with wonder as we have seen, but everything of fear, which, as we have also seen, preoccupies the mind, is the perpetual and harassing attendant of these primitive spiritualists. One would think that under such nervous conditions corpulence would be a rarity so great and inexplicable as to be marvellous! Finally, the perfect belief in all these spirits, the absolute, matter-of-fact assumption of their material reality, the air of what might proleptically be called scientific certitude, is enough in itself to render the supposition of wonder extremely precarious. Such a belief is the natural accompaniment, or the meet culmination, of a superstition that is singularly sterile in wonder-tendencies in spite of its possession of many apparent incentives to the feeling of mystery: but spirits are the most usual of primitive visitors.

There may be noticed, however, in the second place, that even among these spirit-swarms there are certain hints of

<sup>69</sup> Frazer, *op. cit.*, III, 60 ff.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* *ib.*, I, 248; II, 57; III, 351.

strangeness, which are bound sooner or later to grow into conditions favoring wonder. The prevailing, though by no means unexceptional, invisibility of the demon is as rich a source of wonder-development as can be wished. In dreams, indeed, all may have seen demons; in visions the wizards are supposed to behold them; and at times of great excitement, when a whole village is in frenzied pursuit of the plaguing sprites, many actually believe they see them dodging and running about. But, for the most part, houses are beaten, and streets charged, without any visible meeting with the dreaded invaders. When belief, for one cause or another, shall grow less absolute, this invisibility will become a distinguishing mark, and the cause of many premonitory ghost-shivers. Again, the power of the unholy spirits, though so man-like, is always open to exaggeration, which, in turn, will tend ultimately to a more and more refined intangibility. Whether or not in the cases indicated, say that of the Australians, for instance, there is already anything of the supernatural, it is extremely difficult to say, because of the extremely modern and sophisticated connotation of the word *supernatural*. Certainly nothing of the supernatural in the sense of that which contravenes systematized categories of experience: but it is absurd to deny that the Australian is conscious of the supernatural in the sense of a power greater than his own—the sense which Principal Jevons supports;<sup>71</sup> for the admission means nothing more than repeating that the spiritual powers were not ‘spiritual,’ but material. As Crawley puts it, “Primitive man believes in the supernatural, but supernatural beings and existences are to him really material—the supernatural is a part of and obeys the laws of nature.”<sup>72</sup>

We may now pause to summarize the results already obtained. All the premises and tendencies of primitive thought and belief so far noticed, with the possible exception of the one ingredient of invisibility in the last case, lead away from wonder rather than toward it; and they evince a general disposition on the part of early mental and religious conditions to have less and

<sup>71</sup> Jevons, *op. cit.*, pp. 19, 23, 41.

<sup>72</sup> Crawley, *op. cit.*, p. 62.



less to do with wonder the more primitive they are. We have now practically covered the field indicated by the picture drawn by Vierkandt. In one way or another—by the discussion of the mental and emotional cues to wonder, surprise, reflection, curiosity, imagination, credulity, belief, fear; or of the institution, as it may be called, of magic; or of the data of animism, so far as we have undertaken them—the premises, and the subjective and objective characteristics, of that typical picture have been mentioned and commented upon.

Is the task, then, ended? Has the field of tendencies been explored sufficiently, and is the general negative conclusion in the matter of wonder and marvel to stand as it now is? The task cannot be so simple. Human nature is not so amenable to one-way categories. It always has a habit of disturbing the best laid and best considered of such rigid cabinet-filings. The student too often sees only one way of the web, and forgets the warp in the woof. It is proper, therefore, to turn again to the general field of primitive conditions with the expectation of finding in some matters not mentioned by Vierkandt the presence, or at least the seed, of contrary tendencies that will count toward the development of a sense of wonder even in very early conditions. Now the logic of the case, as it stands revealed by the steps already taken, indicates that what is necessary for this development of wonder is a certain specialization and uniqueness here and there in the midst of common and universal conditions, a separating and secluding tendency, by which the individuality that belongs to rarity may grow up in the midst of the communal character and characteristics of primitive life. It is the particular, the glaringly personal, the discrete fruit of variety apotheosized in exaggerated specialties and close corporations, that is needed as much for the production of real wonder as for the economic and social advance of the horde or clan. And it is in the hitherto neglected side of animism, in its aspect or dogma of separate, overlordling deities—great, particular, and individual spirits, far removed from the ordinary demon—that the first of such specializing tendencies may be noted.

Upon the nature of the gods, however, the anthropologists

do not agree. While the older anthropology has been in the habit of regarding them as segregations from the great animistic company of ghosts and spirits,<sup>73</sup> Dr. Lang has of late strongly, though to very few convincingly, supported the theory that 'savage supreme beings', such as the Australian *Daramulun*, originate in no specialization within animistic circles, are not spiritual beings at all, but are the idealizations of the savage himself, as conceived by himself. Such a being "was not originally differentiated as 'spirit' or 'not spirit'. He is a Being, conceived of without the question of 'spirit' or 'no spirit' being raised; perhaps he was originally conceived of before that question could be raised by men. When we call the Supreme Being of savages a 'spirit' we introduce our own animistic ideas into a conception where it may not have originally existed. If the god is 'the savage himself raised to the *n*<sup>th</sup> power' so much the less of a spirit is he."<sup>74</sup> A very questionable proof and illustration of this theory is the case of *Daramulun*. Mr. Howitt writes thus: "This supernatural being, by whatever name he is known, is represented as having at one time dwelt on the earth, but afterwards to have ascended to a land beyond the sky, where he still remains, observing mankind. As *Daramulun*, he is said to be able to 'go anywhere and do anything.' He can be invisible; but when he makes himself visible, it is in the form of an old man of the Australian race. He is evidently everlasting, for he existed from the beginning of all things, and he still lives. But in being so, he is merely in the state in which, these aborigines believe, everyone would be if not prematurely killed by evil magic. Combining the statements of the legends and the teachings of the ceremonies, I see, as the embodied idea, a venerable kindly Headman of a tribe, full of knowledge and tribal wisdom, and all-powerful in magic, of which he is the source, with virtues, failings, and passions, such as the aborigines regard them. Such, I think, they picture the All-Father to be, and it is most difficult for one of us to divest himself of the tendency to endow such a supernatural

<sup>73</sup> See, e.g., Jevons, *op. cit.*, p. 175; Im Thurn, in *Journ. Anthropol. Instit.*, XI, 374; and Tylor, as quoted above, note 64.

<sup>74</sup> Lang, *Making of Relig.*, p. 187.

being with a nature *quasi*-divine, if not altogether so—divine nature and character.”<sup>75</sup> Later on, indeed, with the popularization of ghost and spirit worship, such a Being as this All-Father would by analogy come to be regarded as a spirit and be placed side by side with other “non-original gods that were once ghosts.”<sup>76</sup>

The best thing to be done, in view of the present state of the question, is to speak of the following kinds of gods: original gods who are Supreme Fathers and non-animistic; gods who were originally ghosts or other spirits, and are not Supreme Fathers, and who appear in great number as local deities, or as tutelary deities of sections of the community, or as tutelary deities of individuals;<sup>77</sup> lastly, original gods who became animistic by analogy. Now, in any class the element of individuality or specialization, and so of the rarity that makes for wonder, is distinctly present. Two particular cases, however, should be noted. In the first place, in whatever way the god arises, he is universally distinguished from the animistic crowd by his benign intentions toward men and even helpful offices in their behalf. Such goodness, though, does not produce intimacy in the popular breast to anywhere near the degree that intimacy is precipitated by the malignity of the demons. The good god means, to the savage, the harmless god, whom he need not worry about in the course of his struggles against the torments of the fiends.<sup>78</sup> The air of remoteness which is thus attendant upon the segregation of the god, and which is rather fostered than otherwise by the esoteric teachings of the initiation ceremonies described by Howitt, and Spencer and Gillen, will possess a double tendency,—toward both awe and neglect. The sense of wonder lags under such conditions. Inasmuch as they are not continually present to the popular consciousness, there is, indeed, a rarity about the great gods; but so great is the remoteness that makes the rarity that the wonder becomes more and

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<sup>75</sup> A. W. Howitt, *Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, London 1904, pp. 500-501.

<sup>76</sup> Lang, *Making of Relig.*, pp. 189, 190.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Jevons, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

<sup>78</sup> In some cases the neglect may be due to other causes. See Jevons, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

more a thing of special or esoteric resuscitation. The vividness of wonder is proportioned to the immediate and striking contravention of familiar experiences, to the interruption of the affairs of men and women in their intimate surroundings and offices. By the unlearned peasant, as well as by the ignorant savage, the wonder of Jack the Giant-Killer, for instance, is felt far more and far oftener than the wonder of a creation story. But peasant and savage both experience, at times of religious initiation or celebration, the wonder of the ancient and remote. Thus the greater gods are always a source of wonder to the human breast; but a source that is often quiescent, and the power of which is latent until revived by special conditions of social custom, or by particular circumstances of individual moment.

In the second place, it is to be noted that the original Supreme Father of Dr. Lang's argument derives no wonder from spiritual sources until far on in his downward career. This does not mean that he possesses no wonder of his own. The awe and reverence with which he is regarded, the secret nature of his rites, and the mystery of his revelation,<sup>79</sup> all indicate conditions eminently favorable to, if not the actual presence of, wonder. Indeed, the wonder attaching to him is in all probability far greater than could ever be derived from his alliance with the commonplace crowd of spirits and ghosts. Dr. Lang himself claims that with the rise of ghost-worship the All-Father becomes more and more an indifferent and little regarded power.<sup>80</sup> Again, the powers of *Daramulun*, *Baïame*, and the like, are such as indicate a wonderful nature. It will be necessary in a few moments to show that the magicians are supposed to derive their extraordinary gifts from the gods, who are represented as the sole source of all such gifts. The tale of the other powers of the gods, equally out of the ordinary, equally unique and limited to themselves, may be found in the passage in Howitt to which reference has already been made.<sup>81</sup> There may be wonder without spirits; and many a wonderful tribal hero or head-

<sup>79</sup> Howitt, *op. cit.*, p. 489 ff.

<sup>80</sup> Lang, *Making of Relig.*, pp. XX, 190.

<sup>81</sup> See above, p. 123.

man, idealized by tradition and exaggerated by piety, becomes a spirit only with the rise of the rival spirits in popular regard.

The segregation of the god is paralleled, and undoubtedly also increased, by the segregation of his special mortal servant, the priest. The relation of priest and magician in primitive life is a matter of dispute. While, on the one hand, it is undeniable that in many races individuals are found who combine the functions of priest and sorcerer, and that in many highly developed priesthoods of civilized nations the priest retains certain powers undeniably of magical origin, it is equally certain, on the other hand, that the notable struggle in advanced communities between priest and sorcerer, between magic and religion, is duplicated among the lower races in the opposition of the orthodox medicine-man to the shrewd, crafty, untruthful, and unscrupulous charlatan, who holds no office of public trust, but preys upon the simple and ignorant. Francis La Flesche has eloquently insisted on this opposition; and has shown clearly how the venality of the charlatan, and his readiness to perform for a consideration, have always obscured in the eyes of strangers the real religion and high idealism of the sacred and secretive office of the priest.<sup>82</sup> Exactly what this state of affairs may mean—whether the priest has evolved from the magician, or the two, separate and distinguishable in the beginning, have in the course of later development mutually borrowed the powers of each other, while still maintaining an antagonism of offices—is a matter that must be left to the specialists. For present purposes the best must be made of a bad matter by regarding the two offices separately.

Aside from the specialization of the office, which in itself is a strong factor of rarity, there are other conditions—in part, perhaps, aspects of this segregation—that indubitably produce a tendency toward the wonderful. For one thing, the close relation between the offices of king and priest,<sup>83</sup> so often amounting to identity, doth hedge them mutually with a supreme dignity and

<sup>82</sup> *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, XVIII, 274; cf. Jevons, p. 289; Lang, *Making of Relig.*, p. 183; Frazer, I, 64.

<sup>83</sup> Frazer, *op. cit.*, Index under "Kings as Gods"; Jevons, p. 275 ff.

awful sanctity. Again, the function of mediating between man and god, of supplying the necessary channel of supplication and communication, is always a present reminder of the extraordinary powers of the deity's agent. But greater than either of these is the possession by the priest of actually divine power, received by him as the representative and chief servitor of the god. "Among his associates he is looked upon as set apart from other men by the divinity which chooses him for its agent, or dwells within him. In the Polynesian Islands this is forcibly expressed in the terms applied to the native priests, *pia atua*, 'god boxes', receptacles of divinity; and *amama*, 'open mouths', for through them the god speaks, not their own selves."<sup>84</sup>—The chief evidence of this power, and often the origin of the claim to the priestly office, is in itself one of the most fertile sources of wonder to be met with in primitive life. This remarkable evidence, distinguished by a rarity and fearful intensity appropriate to its character as a propaedeutic to one of the rarest of offices, is that body of phenomena nowadays studied under the various heads of suggestion, hypnotism, mesmerism, neuropathy, psychical phantasms, *pneumatische Erfahrungen*, and the like. The uncritical mind and narrow consciousness of the savage lay him open to such experiences in a degree hardly as yet realized; and, among the members of the horde, the neurotic who is the greatest adept in trance, nervous convulsions, hysteria, and the whole range of that sort of thing, is regarded as a sacred and inspired character. "These inspired seers represent the priesthood of every primitive religion. They cultivate [mystic power] and preserve it, and in them the missionaries of higher faiths have ever found their most resolute foes and successful opponents. The reason is, as I have said, that the shaman has himself been face to face with God, has heard His voice, and felt His presence. His faith therefore is real, and cannot be shaken by any argument. He may indeed, and he generally does, assist his public performances with some trickery, some thaumaturgy; but that this is merely superadded for effect is proved by the general custom that when one such adept is ill

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<sup>84</sup> Brinton, *op. cit.*, p. 58; cf. Frazer, I, 249.

or in straits he will solicit the aid of another.''<sup>85</sup> Moreover, it may be noted, the very addition of such thaumaturgy indicates the general atmosphere of wonder in which the whole performance is witnessed. Here, at least, is a power distinctly immediate in its interruption of the usual courses of daily affairs, whether it be experienced by the layman or by the priest. Indeed, it is hard to conceive of a stronger stimulus to wonder than these strange and awful experiences, wrung from within our own selves, or particularly evident (in their intense disturbances of ordinary vocations) in the vivid contortions of the adepts; nor would it be altogether fanciful to attempt philosophically to trace all wonder back to these mystic and mysterious, even as yet only partly understood, eruptions of a subliminal life. Short even of a speculative attempt, an actually empirical demonstration of such an origin might be made with the aid of that pile of evidence which has been gathered for establishing the foundation of religion in such experiences. Of all the tendencies for wonder, this is undoubtedly the greatest, if it be not the common source of all.

The magician, also, delves in these mysterious effects of an unknown, misunderstood mental pathology. Dr. Stoll, in his eminently suggestive, if not exhaustive work, *Suggestion und Hypnotismus in der Völkerpsychologie* (2d ed., Leipzig 1904), has traced the evidence through many races and ages. Among the Australians, for instance, he finds the *Boyl-yas* are endowed with powers in which the possible and impossible are mixed without critical regard. As a particular indication of the suggestion-nature of the activity of the magicians, he cites the manner in which they obtain their powers.<sup>86</sup> M. Mauss, in an exhaustive article, *L'Origine des pouvoirs magiques dans les sociétés Australiennes*,<sup>87</sup> clearly shows this suggestive nature of initiation. The prevailing method of acquiring the art is, according to this writer, revelation by the dead, by spirits or

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<sup>85</sup> Brinton, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>86</sup> Stoll, *op. cit.*, pp. 113 ff.; cf. Crawley, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 24.

<sup>87</sup> *École Pratique des Hautes Études, Sect. Religieuses*, Paris 1904, pp. 14 ff.

mythic personages, by more complex forms.<sup>88</sup> Mr. Howitt, in the seventh chapter of the work already cited, gives a long account of the making of medicine-men; suggestion and thaumaturgy play the leading rôles. Moreover, the powers of the magician are equalled by the weirdness of his initiation. "The power of the doctor is only circumscribed by the range of his fancy. He communes with spirits, takes aerial flights at pleasure, kills or cures, is invulnerable and invisible at will, and controls the elements."<sup>89</sup> Howitt mentions his powers as: supernatural powers, healing and causing disease, magical practices, rain-making, clairvoyant power, spirit mediumship, special forms of magic, and the possession of songs of enchantment.<sup>90</sup> Thus, the magician, as well as the priest, is the recipient and agent of powers that distinctly lift him above his fellows as a man of wonder and worker of marvels.

The fact of social separateness is here also. In spite of the common possession by the members of his tribe of neuropathic experiences, the shaman is universally distinguished by actual differences of conduct and appearance, as well as by the exercise of superior powers. Not only has the wizard, for instance, the power of communicating with spirits during waking hours, while the ordinary mortal can meet such only in sleep,<sup>91</sup> but, as M. Mauss indicates, "he feels himself different and does not lead the same life, as much from the necessity of imposing upon others as because he imposes upon himself,—particularly because he fears to lose the extraordinarily fugitive qualities acquired. He becomes, he remains, he is obliged to continue 'another.' He has in part a 'new soul.' He is a being whom society makes expand, and he himself must develop his personality until sometimes it is almost confounded with that of the 'superior beings.'"<sup>92</sup> The strenuous forms of initiation, so carefully guarded, in themselves show the attitude adopted toward the office and its powers. But a still further and extremely cogent

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<sup>88</sup> See *Journ. Am. Folk-Lore*, XVIII, 327.

<sup>89</sup> Frazer, *op. cit.*, I, 73.

<sup>90</sup> *Op. cit.*, Ch. VII.

<sup>91</sup> Lang, *Making of Relig.*, p. 49.

<sup>92</sup> *J. A. F.*, XVIII, 327.



factor supports the argument for a wonder-tendency in this place; and that is the character of the belief in the powers of the magician. There is here just that room for slight doubt that is the best growing-ground for wonder. The belief of the savage in magic may indeed, on the one hand, be said to be implicit; but there are nevertheless certain circumstances that undermine that implicitness, though the contrary forces may seldom or never reach the expression of skepticism. I quote from Spencer and Gillen. "Whilst living in close intercourse with the natives, spending the days and nights amongst them in their camps while they were preparing for and then enacting their most sacred ceremonies, and talking to them day after day, collectively and individually, we were constantly impressed with the idea, as probably many others have been before, that one blackfellow will often tell you that he can and does do something magical, whilst all the time he is perfectly well aware that he cannot, and yet firmly believes that some other man can really do it. In order that his fellows may not be considered in this respect as superior to himself he is obliged to resort to what is really a fraud, but in course of time he may even come to lose sight of the fact that it is fraud which he is practising upon himself and his fellows."<sup>93</sup> Is there a more common or fruitful source of wonder than this disbelief in one's own powers but fearful belief in those of others?<sup>94</sup> Is there any more fecund ground of superstition to-day? Is not this state, preëminently human in its subservience to custom and pathetic deceit, the half-conscious but strenuously unacknowledged state in which every spiritualist and mystic finds himself to-day, even as Paracelsus and Empedocles found themselves centuries ago? Verily, this is the secret mark of the wonder-lover and the wonder-worker! Nor is there need of further words to clarify the wonder-tendency of the primitive magician.

When magic becomes 'magical,' it becomes marvellous. When one is inclined to believe, against his better knowledge, that the magician or witch possesses a power over affairs that is distinctly a contravention of usual fact, *i.e.*, natural law, the wizard

<sup>93</sup> *Native Tribes*, etc., p. 130.

<sup>94</sup> *Cf. Crawley, op. cit.*, p. 86; Howitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 411, 533.

is elevated to the higher realm of marvel. A word as to how this step is taken. The case is briefly presented as follows: "A curious instance of the continued influence of magic over religions and races who have discarded it is to be found in the belief that inferior peoples and faiths conquered by such higher races possess greater magical powers. \* \* \* Hence resort is made to members of the inferior race by their superiors when they wish diseases cured or injuries to be subtly avenged. In this way the Dravidians of India, the rude races of the Malay Peninsula, the Finns and Laps, the negroes of the West Indies, are regarded respectively by Hindus, Mohammedan Malays, Scandinavians, and Christian whites as having powerful magic. So, too, the ancient Greeks regarded the Thessalians, and mediæval Christians the pagans of the north, or stole in secret to the ghettos where the despised Jew was supposed to practise his strong magic."<sup>95</sup> As Jevons sums it up: "Hence the more civilised race find themselves face to face with this extraordinary fact, namely, that things which they know to be supernatural are commonly and deliberately brought about by members of the other race."<sup>96</sup> There could hardly be a better proof of the correctness of our description of the psychology of the marvellous than this case which so perfectly fits what was laid down on that subject in the previous chapter.<sup>97</sup>

Finally, there is still another factor, which, while indicating a general perception by the rude mind of whatever is abnormal or strange, provides for the particular isolation of priest and magician. I mean taboo, the institution of the "strongly marked." Whatever its origin, whether in fear, or holiness, or the merely strange and abnormal, or what not,<sup>98</sup> taboo incorporates the specializing tendency of the mind in a custom provocative of awe and reverence, and indicative of high authority. As such, taboo is to be regarded as a custom in harmony with the other specializing tendencies that count

<sup>95</sup> Macculloch, J. A., *Religion* (Temple Primers), London 1904, p. 66.

<sup>96</sup> Jevons, p. 37; cf. Gomme, *Ethnology in Folklore*, New York 1892, Chap. III.

<sup>97</sup> See above, especially pp. 75 ff.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Jevons, Chaps. VI, VII, VIII; Crawley, *op. cit.*, *vid.* Index.

for wonder, and as particularly supplementing and sanctifying, or at least certifying, them by a common and social reverence which is recognized and scrupulously observed by every member of the community. Indeed, if there were more space at our disposal, it might be shown that just as the Dakotans applied the term *wakan* to "everything extraordinary or immense, out of the course of nature, and especially to everything sacred or divine,"<sup>99</sup> so the custom of taboo, universal and common as it is, marks by its associations of awe and reverence the germ of the recognition of that which, because it appears to transcend natural law, carries one into the realms of marvelling. As the spiritual explanation of the unusual became rarer, and reflection commoner, taboo must have become more and more the pronouncement of the unknown and inexplicable. In its application to priest and magician, at any rate, may be seen its conscious employment in some such meaning, still further isolating the sanctity and wonder it certifies.

All the specializing tendencies so far noticed have been beliefs incorporated in practices or individuals. There is one other, and last, and, for the student of literature, chief, tendency that makes for wonder and marvel and contravenes the negative results of our contemplation of Vierkandt's composite of primitive mind. This, also, is a specializing tendency; but of quite another kind. For it is subjective; it is not an institution. It partakes also of a certain sort of generalization; for it has the effect of raising the individual into a typical greatness and universal importance. Indeed, it is the mental factor concerned in the elevation of gods and priests and magicians, and of the neuropathic experiences of taboo, to an impressive importance above the ordinary and commonplace. These are all children of exaggeration. Exaggeration has lifted them all up into notability; exaggeration has crowned priests, and endowed magicians; has magnified the gods, and intensified fits of ecstasy, and elaborated the realm of taboo. It has been the more or less unconscious creator of wonderful beliefs and forms and offices. But it has not stopped there: it has found expression

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<sup>99</sup> Brinton, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

elsewhere. Indeed it is with a further expression of the habit of exaggerating that we come at last upon the dynamic force of wonder, by which, as into an entangling web, the objects and cases of wonder, already noted as customs and beliefs, are woven. Exaggeration employs this further expression in its common, every-day practice of talking and telling and recounting the multitude of passing experiences and past experiences. And into the *tale* are woven the wonder-stock of custom and belief, of god and priest, of magician and the "magical," of trance and *wakan*. Tales of the gods themselves are rehearsed; the magician is now the subject, now the machinery of the recital. The seeing of the dead motives the wonder-tale; and exaggeration makes untruth true. Exaggeration is the most primitive form of imagination; its employment is the first evidence of plasticity, of freedom in that stiff imaginative faculty already noticed. As such, exaggeration is the first door opening into that ideal realm of the marvellous spoken of in the previous chapter; and thus, too, it becomes the gateway of wonder into literature.<sup>100</sup> All the tendencies, all the cases noted so far, are but the colors and tones present to the hand of exaggeration as it spins its web of romance,—as it disports freely in tale and legend, until a critical age regards it with a cold and disapproving eye, and an empirical science rings the first knell of the imaginative interpretation of life.

We shall see this power working upon the memory of celebrated gods, priests, and magicians. Howitt says of one of his native informants: "The man's information as to the customs of his tribe, and especially as to the initiation ceremonies, I found to be very accurate, but it was when he began to speak of the magical powers of the old men of the past generation that I found his coloring to be too brilliant, and more especially as regarded his tribal father, the last great warrior-magician of the tribe. In his *exaggeration* of the exploits of this man one might see an instructive example of how very soon an heroic halo of romance begins to gather around the memory of the illustrious dead."<sup>101</sup> We shall see the same power working upon

<sup>100</sup> Cf. above, Chap. II, pp. 74, 85-88, 91.

<sup>101</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 357; cf. also p. 444. (The italics in the text are mine.)

mere tales of adventure, the classic example being perhaps the wonder-tales of the Polynesian Omai upon his return from Europe to the South Seas.<sup>102</sup> What marvels were his to tell! Of how the English had ships as big as his native island, and guns so big that many men might sit inside of them! Everything was big, very big! So a child's imagination begins by converting magnificently his experiences into indescribable 'bigness'. Again, we shall see exaggeration extended by analogy from familiar to unfamiliar fields, until all the world of internal and external experiences is conquered by the advancing power. Then, indeed, the universe will be subject to wonder: and the dynasty of the marvellous will last for centuries. Yet further: with the wonders of exaggeration fully established, we shall see the beginning of the failure of its power, and of the decay of its throne, through the gradual assertion of those very mental processes that in the previous chapter were described as inimical to wonder. Within the ideal realm of story-telling, rarities will cease to be rare through repetition; marvels will be destroyed by an advancing sophistry; unbelief will raise the ridiculous where once all was awe; reason will succeed imagination; and a new day and power will be born from the old. But in both days the mind of man in its ebb and flow of wonder will remain the same; and each ebb tide will give way to a new flood of marvel.

The preliminary field of wonder has now been more or less adequately covered. The dynamic power that is to make the literature of wonder has been named; the tendencies of belief and custom assisting that power have been indicated; the contrary tendencies have been unfolded at greater length; in both sets, the actual materials present to the exercise of the dynamic power have been suggested: thus we possess an indication of the directions in which we may expect to find the practice of wonder. A previous chapter has supplied us with a description of the complex mental operations of wonder and marvel and their allied states: thus we possess a means of appraising the wonder-value

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<sup>102</sup> Kippis, *Cook's Voyages*, p. 301.

of whatever we examine. Impulse, tendencies, materials, standards of judgment,—all these are now at hand. We are in position to go forward into the actual fields of literary beginnings and search for wonder and marvel. It is proposed to make this application in one of the lower fields,—the Australian; to note there the special conditions under which the general processes are at work, and to examine these processes at work in myth and legend.

## CHAPTER IV.

### WONDER IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN BELIEF AND STORY.

Discussion of sources—General cultural conditions of Central Australians; identity among tribes; low stage of culture—In such a stage the forces against wonder strongly present—More important to regard the forces making *for* wonder—General crowd of spirits not wonderful to natives—Particular spirits and wonder—No gods—Other particular spirits—Magician and wonder; segregation and initiation; extraordinary powers; deceit; exaggeration—Totemic traditions and legends—Heroic and aitiological legends—Wonder in the heroic—Combination of animal and human characteristics—The *inmin-tera*, *Churinga*, and *Wollunqua*—Character of the legends as a whole—The beginning of wonder in literature—Summary: the relation between the beginnings of wonder and of literature.

At the beginning of the previous chapter it was promised that the danger of unreliable information concerning savage races would be met by a careful selection of cases from the works of trained ethnologists. It is a notable and encouraging piece of good fortune that within the last seven years there have been made upon the culture of very primitive races most careful and discriminating researches. The natives of south-east, central, and north-central Australia have been described by trained observers in three long and invaluable works which mark an epoch in the history of the histories of primitive man. Of these three English books that of A. W. Howitt<sup>1</sup> should be mentioned first, because, although in its present form it bears the imprint of a date later than one of the other two, it is nevertheless the final edition of an older series of articles long since famous under the names of their authors, Howitt and Fison. The other two books have been received with an enthusiasm hardly second to the gratitude all ethnologists owe to Howitt and Fison. Two other names are now linked as collaborators in this field; Spenceer and Gillen have become as

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<sup>1</sup> A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, London 1904.

familiar to ethnological footnotes as the other famous pair. In 1899 appeared their first publication, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*; and five years later the companion volume, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, made its bulky way into immediate favor. It is from these works, so opportunely at hand, and especially from the one last named, that the data for the present discussion of wonder and marvel in Australian belief and story are selected. So exhaustive are the works that it will seldom be necessary to step beyond them to the less trustworthy sources of earlier and untrained observation.

Before undertaking the direct examination of the collected myths and legends of some of the Australian tribes, it will be proper to enter into a short discussion of the general economic and religious conditions of the individual tribes that are to fall under the present view. Thus may be avoided that unfortunate lack of definition of particular cultural strata so wisely deprecated by Professor Dewey,<sup>2</sup> and so thoroughly destructive to a history of the sequences of any one tendency or class of phenomena. In the shifting phantasmagoria of tendencies that make now toward, now away from, wonder and marvel, there is need enough for whatever aid can be had from careful stratification of economic conditions; while the only satisfactory method of correlating what may appear as the different stages of the development of wonder, from the naïve creations of the mind of the savage to the sophisticated productions of the Greek romancers, lies not in the application of descriptive adjectives to each step, but in the determination of the association of each step with definite cultural epochs.

In their second book Spencer and Gillen describe the social organization, the customs, and beliefs of the aborigines resident in north-central Australia between the Macdonnell ranges, in the center of the continent, and the Gulf of Carpenteria. Their former book had described the Arunta and Urabunna, lying to the south of the Macdonnell ranges. The chief northern tribes observed were the Unmatjera, Kaitish, Warramunga, and Tjingilli. In their progress northward the authors were able to trace as they went "a gradual change amongst the tribes in regard to

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<sup>2</sup> For reference, see above, p. 97, note 15.



organization and beliefs, and at the same time to demonstrate a fundamental agreement in regard to certain important matters."<sup>3</sup> One notable agreement was the universal belief that "every living member of the tribe is a reincarnation of a spirit ancestor." "As we pass northwards we find the Arunta beliefs and customs merging into those of the Kaitish, the latter into those of the Warramunga, Tjingilli, and Umbaia, and these again, in their turn, into those of the coastal tribes, the Gnaji, Binbinga, Anula, and Mara. Not only is this so, but in the south we find the beliefs of the Urabunna tribe agreeing fundamentally with those of the Arunta. We are thus able to demonstrate the fact that there is no radical difference, so far as important beliefs and customs are concerned, between tribes which count descent in the male line, and others which count it in the female line. . . . Taking every class of evidence into account, it appears to us to be very difficult to avoid the conclusion that the central tribes, which, for long ages, have been shielded by their geographical isolation from external influences, have retained the most primitive form of customs and beliefs. It is an easy matter to imagine the beliefs of the more northern tribes resulting as a modification of original ones, more or less similar to those now held by the central tribes, but the reverse process is not conceivable."<sup>4</sup> In the introductory chapter that follows, the authors remark emphatically upon "the identity or close agreement of the tribes in regard to important customs and beliefs." This appears true in spite of the geographical and linguistic isolation of the tribes, which may have been, as the authors surmise, the result of climatic changes.<sup>5</sup>

From these and other remarks of like nature throughout the book, it is to be noted that all these tribes are for our purposes in practically the same cultural condition, but that the Arunta series probably offers the nearest approach to that older culture from which they must all have descended. Dr. Frazer has maintained that the Arunta represent the savage at his lowest depth. Secluded in that most secluded of continents, where the past

<sup>3</sup> N. T. 2 (= *Northern Tribes of Central Australia*), xi.

<sup>4</sup> N. T. 2, xi.

<sup>5</sup> See N. T. 2, 14, for summary of resemblances and differences.

seems to have been preserved as in a great museum, where types of flora and fauna long since extinct in all other parts of the world are only now becoming extinct,—isolated in that strangely backward continent, the Arunta present a vast contrast, not only to civilized man, but even to many savage races. To illustrate that contrast Frazer emphasizes two of the points brought out by Spencer and Gillen. It appears that although these Australians suffer much from the cold, it has never occurred to them to use as garments the pelts of the wild beasts they have killed. "They huddle, naked and shivering, about little fires, into which, when they drop off to sleep, they are apt to roll and scorch themselves." For a second illustration, they do not understand the true physiology of sex, but imagine that birth is due to the entrance of ancestral spirits into the bodies of the women.<sup>6</sup> Of course Dr. Lang, in his usual breezy fashion, insists upon "collaborating by suggesting objections,"<sup>7</sup> but in the matter of the points noted his success is more rhetorical than real. For the rest, it is enough to remark that these tribes are all in the hunting stage, and the lowest at that; that their implements are of stone, and of the nature "usually described as characteristic of Paleolithic and Neolithic man";<sup>8</sup> that they possess no pottery, but only wooden *pitchis*; that in the matter of government "there is no one to whom the term 'chief,' or even head of the tribe, can be properly applied; but on the other hand there are certain of the elder men, the heads of local groups, who, at any great ceremonial gathering . . . take the lead and superintend matters. They form, as it were, an inner council or cabinet and completely control everything."<sup>9</sup> The local headmen of totemic groups normally receive their office by heredity; but the office is concerned chiefly with seeing to the performance of totemic ceremonies. "In all of the tribes there is a division into local groups, which occupy certain well-defined areas within the tribal territory. There is no such thing as one man being regarded as the owner of any tract of

<sup>6</sup> *The Origin of Totemism*, J. G. Frazer, in *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 71, p. 648.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*, pp. 1012 ff, *Mr. Frazer's Theory of Totemism*.

<sup>8</sup> N. T., Chap. XXIII, esp. p. 635.

<sup>9</sup> N. T., 20, 21.

country. In every case the unit of division is the local totemic group."<sup>10</sup> Descent is reckoned in some tribes by maternal, in others by paternal, rule. The marriage customs vary from individual marriage to what amounts to group marriages at certain times.<sup>11</sup>

In turning to speak of the general religious conditions, it is to be noted that those tendencies of mental operation already noticed as working rather against, than for, wonder, will probably be found to exist with peculiar force among a people so low in the economic scale as the details just given have indicated. Among them, indeed, there is to be met no conception of an unexceptional regularity; spirits of ancestors are as common as men and women, or dogs and trees; they can conceive of no natural impossibility; their curiosity passes into a crude imagination, severely dominated by a narrow field of consciousness and the materials of the past, instead of into a discriminating reflection; credulity and belief are among them as bigoted under authority as conceivable, or as their incredulity and disbelief are under the absence of authority; magic is their "science," practised to a certain extent by everyone. In a word, as being among the lowest of races, these Australian tribes represent in greatest degree the activity of all those tendencies which, making against wonder, have been ascribed to primitive man. One has but to read the pages of Howitt and Spencer-Gillen in order to give ready assent to these matters. The more important task is to inquire how far operative are those contrary tendencies that are friendly to the beginnings and development of wonder. In the directions from which the previous chapter has taught us to look for manifestations of wonder, is there anything to be observed; or are conditions here so extremely primitive as to give no hope for the detection of wonder-elements in myth and legend?

Here, again, there is no necessity for a very extended view; for in the previous chapter much of the support of the wonder-making tendencies was drawn from the very works we are now considering. It is enough to mention those tendencies again

<sup>10</sup> N. T., 27. See, further, Chap. III.

<sup>11</sup> N. T., 141.

and emphasize them briefly by further references to the beliefs and mental attitudes of these Australian aborigines.

The universal belief in spirit ancestors was mentioned a moment ago. Certain peculiarities connected with this belief must now be noticed. It appears that the common belief is in a great body of spirit individuals who were derived from totemic ancestors and are constantly undergoing reincarnation. These totemic ancestors are in themselves strange creatures and of extraordinary powers; they will be discussed when the legends are taken up. At present, it must be stated that the ancestors appear far more marvellous than the spirits they left at various centers; the latter, indeed, are nothing more than the conception of the 'life' of the individual passing on from one incarnation to another, and as such the spirit is as actual a part of the body as an arm or leg, and far more necessary. Aitiological these spirits may even be called, since they explain the phenomena of procreation, as was seen above in the quotation from Frazer, and explicate the mystery of the origin of man. "In the Warramunga tribe the women are very careful not to strike the trunks of certain trees with an axe, because the blow might cause spirit children to emanate from them and enter their bodies. They imagine that the spirit is very minute,—about the size of a small grain of sand,—and that it enters the woman through the navel and grows within her into the child."<sup>12</sup> The Arunta leave a small depression on one side of the burial mound in order that the spirit may pass in and out to visit the body.<sup>13</sup> Upon the death of a man his spirit, which the Urabunna then call *kumpira*, goes back to the place where it was originally left by the totemic ancestor. There it may remain for some time; but sooner or later it is reincarnated.<sup>14</sup> Occasionally the spirit can be heard making a low kind of whistling sound.<sup>15</sup> The Binbinga believe that both men and women can see the spirit children at the *mungai* spots.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, it is to be surmised that among all the tribes the only reason that would be

<sup>12</sup> N. T., 331.

<sup>13</sup> N. T., 506.

<sup>14</sup> N. T., 148.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 530.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

put forward for the invisibility of the spirits would be their minuteness. A small grain of sand passing quickly from a tree or a rock into a woman's navel could be seen only with the greatest difficulty.<sup>17</sup> Other details might be added, which would still further indicate the truth of the conclusion to be drawn from those we have mentioned. The universality of the spirits, their commonness, their scientific or aitiological aspect, the perfect and matter-of-fact belief in them, the materialistic conception: all these suggest nothing of wonder; while the *possible* visibility of the grain-like 'soul' deprives us of even that hopeful source of mystery—invisibility.

There are, however, certain specialized spirits that promise far more for wonder. These special spirits are not subject to reincarnation, nor are their form and size undifferentiated and minute as a grain of sand. Rather, they have the appearance of men, and possess often the power of making medicine-men. They practically amount to *Alcheringa* men, and possess all the extraordinary powers usually attributed to such. Among the Warramunga a spirit called *puntidir*, who lives out in the Mulga scrub, is said to make medicine-men. Two *puntidirs*, for instance, after killing (by magic) a sleeping native, "cut him open and took all his insides out, providing him, however, with a new set, and finally, they put a little snake inside his body, which endowed him with the powers of a medicine-man."<sup>18</sup> Among the Arunta the same kind of spirit individuals are called *iruntarinia*.<sup>19</sup> "In the Binbinga tribe the doctors are supposed to be made by the spirits, who are called Mundadji and Munkaninji, father and son." A story is told of how the old Mundaji caught a native by the neck, killed him, "cut him open, right down the middle line, took out all his insides and exchanged them for those of himself. . . . At the same time he put a number of sacred stones in his body. After it was all over, Munkaninji came up and restored him to life, told him that he was now a medicine-man, and

<sup>17</sup> For further examples, see N. T.2, 145, 150, 162, 163, 169, 170, 258, 330, 421, 430, 431, 450, 451, 505, 513, 519, 527.

<sup>18</sup> N. T.2, 484. For *Alcheringa*, see below, p. 152.

<sup>19</sup> For a full description, see N. T.1 (= *Native Tribes of Central Australia*), Chap. XV.

showed him how to extract bones and other forms of evil magic out of men. 'Then he took him away up into the sky and brought him down to earth close to his own camp, where he heard the natives mourning for him, thinking he was dead. For a long time he remained in a more or less dazed condition, but gradually he recovered and the natives knew that he had been made into a medicine-man. When he operates, the spirit of Munkan-inji is supposed to be near at hand watching him, unseen of course by ordinary people.'<sup>20</sup> Now everything here points to a development of wonder. The specialization in itself would suggest it; the extraordinary powers, the spirit being considered as a great source of magical power and capable of bringing the dead to life, carrying the individual up into the sky, etc., would further indicate it; the esoteric nature of the experience, and the alliance of the spirit with the mysterious medicine-man, would render the presence of wonder more than probable; the obviously trance-like condition under which the subject sees the spirit, and the strong air of deceptive exaggeration in the tale of the whole encounter as set forth by the self-interested doctor, would beyond doubt win a gaping wonder from the crowd; and, finally, quite in line with our previous observations, these spirits, as associated in the popular consciousness with mystery, are, unlike the others noted above, held to be invisible save to the specially and wonderfully initiated.

From spirits it is a short step to gods. Have these tribes any conception of an All-Father, as Dr. Lang would like to believe; or of any sort of a deity? What Howitt has to say upon the matter has already been quoted. He can find no grounds for assigning to the tribes of southeast Australia any conception of divinity, but remarks upon the difficulty with which a modern mind avoids attributing a sense of deity to Mungan, Nurrundere, Baiame, Daramulun, and the like, who are all spiritual idealizations of those great and ancient headmen who, with extraordinary powers, created man and formed the features of the landscape.<sup>21</sup> These beings, supposed to

<sup>20</sup> N. T. 2, 487. See also pp. 488, 501, 502.

<sup>21</sup> Howitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 488 ff.

be still existing as spirits, seem to be practically identical with the totemic ancestors of the tribes visited by Spencer and Gillen. Of these, those authors remark: "In connection with their totemic ancestors it may be said that there is apparently no indication of the development of beliefs which might lead ultimately to the association with one or other of them of special attributes resulting in their finally being regarded in the light of deities."<sup>22</sup> Short of deity, however, there are to be met certain particular spirits that may well be mentioned here. In the Arunta tribe there are mischievous spirits called Oruntja, whom the natives fear,—especially during the night-time. They are in the habit of snatching lonely wanderers and carrying them off underground. Twanyirika is another Arunta-made spirit; he is used for terrifying the women and children. Atnatu, of the Kaitish tribe, has more definite characteristics: a very great man; with a very black face; with no anus; self-made a very great while ago, even before the Old Time; the maker, indeed, of that Old Time or Alcheringa, and of everything that the blackfellow has. There are various tales about him. The Binbinga, in addition to the Mundadji mentioned in the last paragraph, believe in a friendly spirit, Ulurkura, who lives in the woods and rescues men from the clutches of the Mundadji. Only medicine-men can see him. The Mara have a similar spirit whom they call Mumpani. Now, all these spirits, including those that, like Twanyirika, are mere bogies to frighten the women and children, are specializations to be compared with the spirits that make the doctors; and as such they undoubtedly count toward wonder. But whether or not they are actually provocative of wonder, remains a question. There is not about them, with the exception of Atnatu, that fullness of wonderful tale and adventure, that exaggeration and individuality, which characterize the spirits. What is certain, however, is that none of them possesses the moral, cultural, or propitiatory characters of a supreme being.<sup>23</sup>

There can be, then, no differentiation of a priestly office. The nearest to that is the company of elders who direct the ini-

<sup>22</sup> N. T., 496.

<sup>23</sup> See N. T., Chap. XVI.

tiation and totemic ceremonies; but they possess none of the priestly powers or characteristics.

The magician, however, reigns supreme. His power is carefully segregated from the common magic; his office is hedged mightily with mystery. The article of M. Mauss, the most exhaustive upon the subject, has already been mentioned;<sup>24</sup> and the abstracts from Spencer-Gillen given a few paragraphs back represent one method of initiation into that office. All medicine-men are "supposed to have had stones or other objects placed in their bodies by certain spirit individuals, and by virtue of them they can counteract, to a greater or less extent, the evil magic to which any bodily pain is always attributed."<sup>25</sup> Their power is, with one or two exceptions, wholly curative and beneficial. The recital of one or two more instances of initiation will clearly show the mystery and wonder of the making of medicine-men. Sometimes they are made by other medicine-men, instead of by *Iruntarinia* as above. "A celebrated medicine-man named *Ilpailurkna*, a member of the *Unmatjera* tribe, told us that, when he was made into a medicine-man, a very old doctor came one day and threw some of his *atnongara* stones at him with a spear-thrower. Some hit him on the chest, others went right through his head, from ear to ear, killing him. The old man then cut out all his insides, intestines, liver, heart, lungs—everything in fact, and left him lying all night long on the ground. In the morning the old man came and looked at him and placed some more *atnongara* stones inside his body and in his arms and legs, and covered over his face with leaves. Then he sang over him until his body was all swollen up. When this was so he provided him with a complete set of new inside parts, placed a lot more *atnongara* stones in him, and patted him upon the head, which caused him to jump up alive. The old medicine-man then made him drink water and eat meat containing *atnongara* stones. When he awoke he had no idea as to where he was, and said, '*Tju, tju, tju*'—'I think I am lost.' But when he looked around he saw the old medicine-man standing beside

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<sup>24</sup> See above, p. 127, note 87.

<sup>25</sup> N. T., 479.



him, and the old man said, 'No, you are not lost; I killed you a long time ago.' Ilpailurkna had completely forgotten who he was and all about his past life. After a time the old man led him back to his camp and showed it to him, and told him that the woman there was his lubra, for he had forgotten all about her. His coming back in this way and his strange behavior at once showed the other natives that he had been made into a medicine-man.'<sup>26</sup>

It will be noticed that this story does not differ materially from the one quoted above where Mundadjji and Munkaninji made a medicine-man in the Binbinga tribe, except in the fact that where the operators in that case were spirits, the operator here is represented as "a very old doctor." Among the War-ramunga tribe the making of medicine-men by old practitioners from the neighboring Worgaia tribe is one of the most secret of their customs. But the similarity of the tales, in spite of the difference of the agents, is remarkable, and indicates a long tradition and jejune custom<sup>27</sup> within which the imagination moves only in exaggeration of certain well-known and long-used properties. The killing, slitting, deprivation of entrails, placing of magical stones within the body together with new entrails, the strange awakening and weird return to camp, are properties recurring again and again in stories throughout the region explored. What was the original reason for the stone detail can only be conjectured. It may have had some reference to the sensations of the wizard when under neuropathic conditions; or the stones may have been regarded as powerful through association with sacred spots, such as the *oknanikilla*, where the totemic ancestors went into the ground, leaving their spirit parts behind them; but more probably it was the mere handiness to the imagination of stones to represent the materialistic conception of magic power. Among the Arunta we have seen that a snake was used in place of stones.<sup>28</sup> This explana-

<sup>26</sup> N. T.2, 480.

<sup>27</sup> Especially in view of the wide distribution of the tales throughout tribes that for years have had little or no communication. This would imply an antiquity of the tales equal to that of the original distribution of the tribes.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. also the *kupitja*, and the *Irman*, N. T.2, 484-5.

tion is on a par with the materialistic conception of all disease and illness as an affection to be got rid of by the supposed removal of some object, a small stick or stone, from the body of the patient. The magical power of the medicine-man was probably regarded as only a particular kind of bodily affection or disease, as it were; and his stones were only the particular stones that caused those peculiar affections. Again, the origin of the detail of disemboweling rests in conjecture, and must have had a beginning equally simple and commonplace with that of the *atnongara*. The strange awakening and return seem clearly the product of sensation-experiences, probably neuropathic. But, whatever the origin of such details in a remote antiquity, before the various tribes had branched off from a parent stock, their present state reveals all the mystery of arbitrary and inexplicable power that always characterizes the mummeries of magic, whether in the wilds of Africa, the fairs of the middle ages, or the seances of modern spiritualism.

The following case from the Arunta well illustrates the deceptive accessories of the magic-man. From such deception springs a fearful belief in another's magical power, although the individual believer is aware of his own impotence,—a state of belief distinctly favorable to the wonderful, as has previously been remarked.<sup>29</sup> When any man of the Arunta tribe feels that he may become a wizard, he goes alone to a cave where the *Iruntarinia* are supposed to dwell. "Here, with considerable trepidation, he lies down to sleep, not venturing to go inside, or else he would, instead of becoming endowed with magic power, be spirited away forever. At break of day, one of the *Iruntarinia* comes to the mouth of the cave, and, finding the man asleep, throws at him an invisible lance which pierces the neck from behind, passes through the tongue, making therein a large hole, and then comes out through the mouth. The tongue remains throughout life perforated in the center with a hole large enough to admit the little finger; and when all is over, this hole is the only visible and outward sign of the treatment of the *Iruntarinia*. How the hole is really made it is impossible to say, but as shown in the illustration it is always present in the genuine

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<sup>29</sup> See above, p. 129.

medicine-man. In some way of course the novice must make it himself; but naturally no one will ever admit the fact, indeed it is not impossible that, in the course of time, the man really comes to believe that it was not done by himself. A second lance thrown by the *Iruntarinia* pierces the head from ear to ear, and the victim falls dead and is at once carried into the depths of the cave. . . . Within the cave the *Iruntarinia* removes all the internal organs and provides the man with a completely new set, after which operation has been successfully performed he presently comes to life again, but in a condition of insanity. (*Atnongara* stones are also placed in his body by the spirit.)—This (the insanity) does not last long, and when he has recovered to a certain extent the *Iruntarinia*, who is invisible except to a few highly gifted medicine-men and also to the dogs, leads him back to his own people. The spirit then returns to the cave, but for several days the man remains more or less strange in his appearance and behaviour until one morning it is noticed that he has painted with powdered charcoal and fat a broad band across the bridge of his nose. All signs of insanity have disappeared, and it is at once recognized that a new medicine-man has graduated. According to etiquette he must not practise his profession for about a year, and if during this time of probation the hole in the tongue closes up, as it sometimes does, then he will consider that his virtues as a medicine-man have departed, and he will not practise at all. Meanwhile, he dwells upon his experiences, doubtless persuading himself that he has actually passed through those which are recognised as accompanying the making of a medicine-man by the *Iruntarinia*, and at the same time he cultivates the acquaintance of other medicine-men, and learns from them the secrets of the craft, which consist principally in the ability to hide about his person and produce at will small quartz pebbles or bits of stick; and, of hardly less importance than this sleight-of-hand, the power of looking preternaturally solemn, as if he were the possessor of knowledge quite hidden from ordinary men.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> N. T. 1, 523-525.

Deception and exaggeration go hand in hand: and the deceptive character of the magician is no more evident in this story than is the habit of exaggerating details in order to win popular regard. A word further may be hazarded upon this subject. While the power of magic by itself is not yet a matter of wonder to the aborigines, who all possess some degree of it,<sup>31</sup> the magician is distinguished by his superior endowment in magical lore and ability, as well as by the mysterious methods undertaken to secure the endowment. The power is not different in kind, but exaggerated in degree; and the consciousness of his exaggerated position continually dictates to the magician a course of deceit and mendacity calculated to heighten still further his position in popular superstition. From this fertile field arises the wonder of these Australian medicine-men. It is hardly right to look for examples of this wonder in the pseudo-medical activities of the doctors, inasmuch as their practices of pretending to remove twigs from the bodies of their patients are the commonly acknowledged *materia medica* of the tribe; but it is entirely proper to insist that only the doctors possess this curative power, and that, while having presumably gained it through mysterious and awful methods, they are extremely careful to surround the exercise of the power with all the exaggeration of ceremony and *hoecus-poeus* that will impress the ignorant with a sense of strange and extraordinary conditions. One of the most valuable of the mysterious accessories is the *kupitja*, a small object worn through the nose by the medicine-men of the Warramunga tribe. Spencer and Gillen say that "the most profound mystery attaches to this innocent-looking little article."<sup>32</sup> "No young medicine-man to whom one of them has been given would ever dream of conducting an investigation into its structure. He implicitly believes the old man, who tells him that it was made in the Aleheringa and is full of magic power."<sup>33</sup> In serious cases a great deal is made of these instruments, which are supposed to counteract the evil magic resident in the patient by being projected into his body.

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<sup>31</sup> See, *e.g.*, N. T.2, Chap. XIV, p. 456; N. T.1, 530, 534 ff.

<sup>32</sup> N. T.2, 485.

<sup>33</sup> N. T.2, 484, note.

The old Worgaia-man who makes them is fully aware of the exaggerated importance and sanctity to be gained by his possession of the *kupitjas*, and steadfastly refused to confess his authorship. He persisted in claiming that they were made in the Aleheringa "by some very powerful old snakes."<sup>34</sup> Extraordinary as the magicians' powers may appear, however, the belief of the natives in their reality and efficacy is perfect. Examples of this recur again and again: and were it not for the tremendous insistence upon the extraordinary character of the magicians' powers, which overbalances the wonder-destroying power of absolute belief; were it not for the careful exaggeration of the rarity of their office and endowments, the wonder of these magical practices might well sink beneath the chilling effect of a matter-of-fact belief. The whole set of circumstances is well illustrated by the following picture from the Arunta tribe. "In serious cases the action is more dramatic, and the medicine-man needs a clear space in which to perform. The patient, perhaps too ill to sit up, is supported by some individual, while the medicine-man who has been called in and may have come a long distance, gravely examines him and consults with other practitioners who may be present. . . . The diagnosis may occupy some time, during which everyone maintains a very solemn appearance, all conversation being carried on in whispers. As a result the medicine-man will perhaps pronounce that the sick man is suffering from a charmed bone inserted by a magic individual, such as a *Kurdaitcha*; or perhaps, worse still, the verdict is that one of the *Iruntarinia* has placed in his body an *Ullinka* or short barbed stick attached to an invisible string, the pulling of which, by the malicious spirit, causes great pain. If the latter be the case it requires the greatest skill of a renowned medicine-man to effect a cure. While a patient is supported in a half-sitting attitude, the medicine-man will first of all stand close by, gazing down upon him in the most intent way. Then suddenly he will go some yards off, and looking fiercely at him will bend slightly forwards and repeatedly jerk his arms outwards at full length, with the hand outstretched, the object being to thereby project some of the *Atnongara* stones into the patient's

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<sup>34</sup> N. T.2, 486.

body, the object of this being to counteract the evil influence at work within the latter. Going rapidly and with a characteristic high-knee action from one end of the cleared space to the other he repeats the movement with dramatic action. Finally, he comes close again, and, after much mysterious searching, finds and cuts the string which is invisible to every one except himself. There is not a doubt among the onlookers as to his having really done this. Then once more the projecting of the *Atnongara* stones takes place, and crouching down over the sick man he places his mouth upon the affected part and sucks, until at last either in fragments or, very rarely, and only if he be a very distinguished medicine man, the *Ullinka* is extracted whole and shown to the *wondering* onlookers, the *Atnongara* stones returning, unseen, once more into his own body."<sup>35</sup>

The deceit and exaggeration, the mysterious accessories of the art and the wondering credulity of the onlookers, are all represented here. Among the other exaggerated powers of the magicians the following may be noted briefly. The Mungaberra attribute special powers to the magicians, such as ability to transform themselves into eagle-hawks, and, thus disguised, travel long distances during the night.<sup>36</sup> In many of the tribes the magician is able to affect a whole group of men and women with disease, or to discover the individual who is responsible for the death of any native.<sup>37</sup> The Mara medicine-man possesses the power "of climbing at night-time by means of a rope, invisible to ordinary mortals, into the sky, where he can hold converse with the star people."<sup>38</sup> Howitt<sup>39</sup> mentions other powers, such as rain-making, clairvoyance, spirit-mediumship, enchantment by song, etc., etc.

It is now evident that, among the forces counting for wonder, the belief in spirits, or the animistic force, tends to produce wonder only in the case of the special spirits segregated from

<sup>35</sup> N. T. 1, 531-2. Cf. Howitt, 386-387.

<sup>36</sup> N. T. 1, 533. Cf. Howitt, 374, 388.

<sup>37</sup> N. T. 1, 532, 533.

<sup>38</sup> N. T. 2, 488. Cf. Howitt, 359.

<sup>39</sup> Howitt, Chap. VII.

the great reincarnating mass; that in the absence of definitely conceived gods we may turn only to these particular spirits for a sign of that wonder usually attributed to the god. That the magician, furthermore, offers the example of the most powerful of the forces making for wonder, is clearly seen by his segregated character, mysterious initiation, extraordinary powers, practice of deceit and exaggeration, and by the popular reverence extended to him.

With the completion of this preliminary view it is convenient to pass directly to an examination of the totemistic legends collected by Spencer and Gillen in their second volume.<sup>40</sup> A great part of these traditions consists of the sort of details just discussed under the aspects of spirit and magician. These very tales, indeed, are the sources which furnish the data for those aspects. No further discussion along those lines will be necessary.<sup>41</sup> But closely related to the totemic ancestor, and so leading us to a view of the relations between wonder and that most important and puzzling of primitive customs, the totem, is a further mass of details which must now be investigated.

The great similarity of all the legends renders possible the selection of a typical story, which may be prefixed to the enumeration of the details. Here is the tradition of the origin of the Unmatjera as gathered from their own lips, but told in the words of the collector. "In the Alcheringa an old crow man sat down at Ungurla by the side of what is now called the Woodforde River. He arose at first from a Churinga, and when he came out he looked at himself and said, 'I think that I must be a hawk; but no—I am too black.' Then he thought that he was an eagle-hawk, but decided that he had too much wing; then he looked at his arms, out of which black feathers had sprouted, and said, 'I am a crow.' When the sun shone he sat out on the

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<sup>40</sup> N. T.2, Chap. XIII.

<sup>41</sup> The following references to spirit and magic in the legends may be appended: Spirits, N. T.2, 396, 417, 421, 435, 445, 450; special individuals who can see them, 450-451; reincarnation, 404, 419, 450; Atnatu, 420; spirit-children, 423, 426, 428, 431, 438, 441, 444, 450; sacredness of the Nanja, 448. Magic, 396, 428; as ordinary power, 456, 466, 477; rain-maker, 393; magic-song, 421, 443; power of the left hand, 425, 426, 428; pointing-sticks, 433; regarded with awe, 462.

top of a hill warming himself, and when it set he went back to his Churinga camp and slept there. One day he saw, far away in the distance, a lot of *immitera*—that is, incomplete men and women—belonging to the Unmatjera tribe. He decided to go over and make them into men and women. He did this by means of his beak, and then returned to his camp and there made a *Churinga lelira*, a sacred stone knife, with which he intended to come back and circumcise them. Meanwhile, however, two old Parenthie lizard men had come up from far away to the south, and, with their teeth, they both circumcised and subincised the men, and performed the operation of *atna-arilthakuma* upon the women. When the old crow had got his *lelira* ready and was just about to start, he looked out and saw that the two Parenthies had been before him, and so as there was nothing further for him to do, he stayed at Ungwurla, and there he died. A big black stone marks the spot, and in the *ertnatlunga* there his *lelira* is kept, as well as a number of stones which are Churinga, and represent the eggs which he used to void in the place of the usual excrement.”<sup>42</sup>

Our observations may well take the form of a commentary upon the extraordinary details of this legend. Let it be first noticed that the phrase “In the Alcheringa,” or its equivalents, “In the Wingara,” “In the Mungai time,” is the usual beginning phrase, the “once-upon-a-time” of these stories. The Alcheringa, or Wingara, or Mungai, is the far past, or dream-time,<sup>43</sup> in which the totemic ancestors lived. There is, then, the recognition of a temporal remoteness in which beginnings began; and about such a word and its content there would seem at first glance to cling something of the aroma of wonder and day of faery that haunt our own conceptions of primal times. Certain it is that the Central Australian regards the Alcheringa as a time of greater character than the present, as a time distinguished by the play of extraordinary power and happenings. “. . . it may be remarked,” write our authors, “that the further we pass back from the present towards the Alcheringa times, the greater are the powers supposed to have been wielded

<sup>42</sup> N. T. 2, 399.

<sup>43</sup> *Alcheri* means *dream*.



by the members of the totem."<sup>44</sup> Such a conception, however, is nothing more than the simple result of that very first of exaggeration's activities by which the contents of the past perpetually undergo an enlargement of figure and idealization of power. The very next words of the passage referred to indicate that this simplicity of character does indeed attach to the conception. "Every native has a great respect for his *kankwia* or grandfather, and imagines him to have been a far greater man than he himself is, while his *kankwia's kankwia* is proportionately greater still; in fact we may say that the virtues and powers of various kinds attributed to any ancestor increase in geometric proportion as we pass backwards towards the *Alcheringa*."<sup>45</sup> But such simple exaggeration is quite other than our own conception of the Beginning; our wider consciousness and sad sophistication in the limitation of human life and power mutually assist to enchant the primal day with the fascination of a great freedom, of a Golden Age, or of a Garden of Eden where Jahve walks with man in the cool of the evening. The narrow consciousness of the Arunta and Unmatjera, in the want of such complex endowment, must take the phrase "In the *Alcheringa*" with far less of enticing strangeness. Nor does the appellation *dream-time* indicate the contrary; for dreams to them are material realities.<sup>46</sup> Finally, both the commonness of the phrase, taken side by side with a mental sluggishness and indifference, and also the full and matter-of-fact belief in such a time, so that "It happened in the *Alcheringa*" is sufficient answer to any objection as to possibility,<sup>47</sup> must serve as numbing tendencies to the simple sense of wonder that is stirred in the minds of the aborigines by this naïve exaggeration of the virtue of the past.

But whatever may be the vagueness of the wonder-consciousness as touching the *Alcheringa* in the abstract, it is beyond controversy that the ancestors who arose in that dimness of time are depicted and regarded as men of extraordinary powers. "The

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<sup>44</sup> N. T.2, 277.

<sup>45</sup> N. T.2, 277.

<sup>46</sup> N. T.2, 451.

<sup>47</sup> N. T.1, 137.

Central Australian native." Spencer and Gillen remark, "is firmly convinced, as will be seen from the accounts relating to their Aleheringa ancestors, that the latter were endowed with powers such as no living man now possesses. They could travel underground or mount into the sky, and could make creeks or water-courses, mountain ranges, sand-hills and plains."<sup>48</sup> These powers are not illustrated in the legend given above, but it is easy to choose cases from the great number furnished in the other traditions of the collection. The *Ertwaininga* women of the Unmatjera, when frightened, went down into the ground and traveled on out of sight;<sup>49</sup> the ancestors of the emu totem of the Kaitish "dived down into the ground and came up at Burnia, a long way off, where there is a soakage."<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the ancestor usually arises in the first place from the earth or rocks, or from some water-hole, and goes down into the same at the end.<sup>51</sup> Among the Arunta they arise, as in the legend cited above, from Churinga.<sup>52</sup> Going up into the sky is a power especially attached to flying totemic ancestors, such as the flying-fox and the white cockatoo;<sup>53</sup> although occasionally the wind catches up the ancestor and sends him to heaven.<sup>54</sup> The making of natural features of the landscape was one of the duties, it might be said, of the Aleheringa individuals. "Close to what is now called Powell Creek is a small water-course, made in the Aleheringa by an old Thamungala (a frilled lizard) man who spent his time there performing ceremonies. A number of men of the Thaballa (laughing boy) Totem came from Lamara, and hunted the old lizard away. As he travelled on he made Powell Creek, and the course of the stream as it flows away northwards marks the line of retreat."<sup>55</sup> Two wildeat men made creeks by cutting the ground with their knives;<sup>56</sup> the snake-man made

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<sup>48</sup> N. T.2, 490.

<sup>49</sup> N. T.2, 403.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 415.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 395, 396, 400, 414, 429, 431, 433, 440, 441, etc.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 399.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 428, 424.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 444.

<sup>55</sup> N. T.2, 423.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 424, 425.

many creeks as he traveled.<sup>57</sup> With these cases may be grouped the multitude of examples of the rise of a hill, or mountain range, or pile of rocks, or trees, to mark the place of some Alcheringa event, such as the place where the ancestor appeared or disappeared, held ceremonies, or performed other striking acts. A pelican burned up a duck man's camp, and a heap of stones arose to mark the spot;<sup>58</sup> a great gum-tree arose to mark the spot where another ancestor died;<sup>59</sup> a hill marks the place where an emu man was killed.<sup>60</sup>

Now it is at once apparent that there are two sorts of details in these examples. There is the detail that is distinctly individual in its characterization; it may be called the 'heroic' detail: such is the power of traveling underground, or up into the sky. There is also the detail of causation, or the aitiological detail, as it is usually called: such are the making of creeks and the raising of mountains, rocks, etc.—Both sorts are extraordinary: are they wonderful to the Central Australian? This must now be decided.

Of the first, then, first! Traveling underground is certainly a feat not indulged in by the native; unless, as he might believe, by the great magician,—and that would make for wonder immediately. Indubitably such power is a rarity even in the consciousness of an Australian. Has he any explanation? Of course! It was in the Alcheringa!—a vague, but to him perfectly satisfactory answer. The rarity remains after the explanation is given,—which is the condition of the second of the six cases of rarity. Wonder, therefore, if present at all, is doomed to decay and extinction.<sup>61</sup> But the absence of any idea of unexceptional regularity takes away the real mental vividness of the rarity itself; and there is left only the somewhat indifferent realization of a rarity by a narrow consciousness that finds some difficulty in fixing its attention steadily upon the remote conditions of the Alcheringa. Thus, the sense of wonder is rendered still more precarious. Add to this the perfect belief to

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 432. Cf. 436, 438, 440.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 434.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 398.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 394. Cf. 395, 396, 397, 398, 400, 405, 408, 414, 419, 420, 426.

<sup>61</sup> See above, p. 63.

which Spencer and Gillen testify above;<sup>62</sup> and the common conception of the powers of one's ancestors as increasing from one's grandfather to great-grandfather, and so on, as time grows more remote,<sup>63</sup>—add these, and, in spite of the rarity in experience of this underground traveling, the wonder of it in the primitive *Weltanschauung* glimmers but feebly, if at all. Finally, it is not, perhaps, out of place to suggest that the belief is easily motivated by the dog-holes with which the native is familiar, and of which he sometimes takes advantage for shelter. The most that can be said, then, is that there is here, perhaps, a feeble inclination to wonder.

Mounting into the skies is another 'heroic' power which may be regarded in practically the same light as traveling underground. For the same reasons its wonder-value to the Australian is, doubtless, rather insignificant,—a beginning certainly; but only a faint beginning. It has been pointed out, however, that this is a power often claimed by the magicians.<sup>64</sup> This circumstance, unless counterbalanced by the winged character of the totem-animal mentioned in the illustration above, might serve to bring a remote character more vividly to present attention. Finally, whether or not these two powers are considered cases of magic, I cannot say. There is not sufficient evidence to allow a conclusion.

Of the aitiological details it may be necessary to speak a trifle more carefully. The origin of these details lies in the desire to explain the 'how' of natural phenomena; these phenomena, and not the ancestors, are to be regarded as the stimuli of the legends. Around the ancestors as a convenient nexus and adequate explanation grew up the mass of aitiological material, extending the ancestors' wanderings, increasing their virtues, and multiplying their avocations. The extraordinary necessity and an extraordinary power existed side by side in the consciousness of the simple savage: a power greater than his was needed to make mountain and river; his ancestors possessed such power by virtue of his own natural exaggeration of

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<sup>62</sup> See above, p. 154.

<sup>63</sup> See above, p. 153.

<sup>64</sup> See above, p. 150, and note 38.

the remote; the association of the two was inevitable, and the mental association was conceived as objective cause and effect. The process is the same that we have seen underlying the practice of magic, the same mistaking of subjective contiguity for objective relation.

But it must be emphasized that no actual wonder attends this process.<sup>65</sup> When it is said that the savage wonders as to the 'how' of mountain and stream, the only wonder really meant is that sort of wonder that is merely another name for a rather idle curiosity; the double use of the word "wonder" itself has in this case been responsible for that common idea of the savage whereby he appears surrounded by a halo of religious or metaphysical wonder at the marvels of creation. We come by the mistake, quite respectably, quite eminently, from ancient philosophy. "For from wonder men, both now and at the first, began to philosophize, having felt astonishment originally at the things which were more obvious, indeed, among those that were doubtful," says Aristotle.<sup>66</sup> But there is no metaphysical philosophizing among the Arunta and Kaitish; there is no long and ardously concentrated and discriminating attention, intelligently, critically focused upon the 'how' of nature. Instead, there is the utterly uncritical, momentary experience of mental association childishly erected into a story. It is indeed the 'science' of the savage, the weakly imaginative, narrowly conceived answer to a question barely put. But whether we use the word wonder in its looser sense of idle curiosity, or in its stricter meaning of a puzzlement of intelligence, in either sense there can be ascribed to these aitiological details no significance in wonder. It is only when the light of a completer knowledge begins to break, as we have seen it breaking among the early Greek philosophers, that these extraordinary powers, originally bound up with the matter-of-fact 'science' of primitive mind, are regarded as wonderful, because at last recognized as impossible. Belief lasting longer than 'science,' the earlier 'science' becomes a marvel! Thus, too, is it to-day, bringing the matter home, in

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<sup>65</sup> For the exaggeration of aitiological detail to the point of wonder, see below, p. 169.

<sup>66</sup> *Metaphysics*, I, 2 (Bohn's Lib.)

the case of Hebrew scripture and its marvels of creation.

But of that another time! It must now be remarked that the lack of wonder in aitiological detail is again seen by the application of our six typical cases of rarity to the original point of view, that is to the primitive view that experienced objective phenomena as a stimulus to observation. In the multitude of cases where some natural object—hill, tree, pile of rocks, etc.—is said to have arisen to mark a sacred spot, it is particularly apparent that some more or less slight degree of rarity has suggested the need of explanation,—has, in other words, motivated the ‘story’. For instance, it is said in one locality that when the old Murunda died and went into the ground a big stone arose to represent his organs, which were abnormally developed;<sup>67</sup> at another place it is told that two Aleheringa men pulled out their penes and placed them on the ground, whereupon, in each case, a stone arose to mark the spot.<sup>68</sup> Obviously, in both examples, the peculiar shape of the stone has given rise to the legend. Rarity of size, also, often motives a tale.<sup>69</sup> Clearly we have again the conditions of the second of the six cases,—that where an actual rarity still remains after the explanation is given. The inference of the previous paragraph is now only strengthened by the conclusion to be drawn from these conditions, *viz.*, the decay of wonder. Even if there could have been, and we believe there could not have been, any real wonder to begin with, it must speedily have fallen into desuetude. The ‘heroic’ detail shows at least an inclination to wonder; the aitiological detail shows almost an opposition to any original wonder.

It is now possible, after completing the discussion of the extraordinary powers of the totemic ancestors, to turn again to the first, typical illustration and carry our research a step further. It will be remembered how the old crow man found difficulty in determining what he was; how he finally hit upon the crow because of the black feathers which sprouted out of

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<sup>67</sup> N. T., 2, 396.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 440. Cf. 400, 408, 430.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 398, 433.

his arms; how he possessed a beak, and yet could think and talk like a man. It is this extraordinary union of natures and forms, of man and beast, that must now be examined.

The state of affairs pictured here is very common in the legends.<sup>70</sup> The majority of ancestors may be said to have undergone the trying ordeal of discovering what sort of animals they were. The solution of the anomalous character which such a belief presents to our eyes lies in properly emphasizing the fact that these ancestors were totemic ancestors, and that as such they were again and again the ancestors of animal totems. Let us occupy for a moment the point of view of the savage who finds himself the member of an animal, say the black crow, totem. Why is this totem, the savage asks, the black crow totem? The obvious answer is that the totemic ancestor was a black crow. But he must have been a man also! Then he was a man and a crow too! In other words, I believe that these details now under consideration were in origin strictly aitiological. Primitive man, finding himself a member of an animal totem, having long since forgotten the reason for the social division, casts about in his mind for an explanation of the circumstance and invents the simplest possible 'reason',—a reason that depends upon nothing else than the juxtaposition in his mind of man and his totem animal, and issues most irrationally and naïvely in the statement "He was a black crow!" Nay, more! His own state of mind, and almost his very question, are attributed to the ancestor. This naïvete of the savage becomes the psychological character of his forbear. Like his descendant, the ancestor speculates as to what sort of an animal he is, and finds out only after several guesses. These characteristics, and the truth of our interpretation, are well illustrated by the conversation of two ancestors, one of whom was Thungalla,<sup>71</sup> the other Umbitjana.<sup>72</sup> "The Thungalla looked at his shadow (*illinja*) and called himself Illinja. At first down grew all along his arms and hair on his head, and his eyes became big and stood out like those of the Titherai bird. The two men

<sup>70</sup> See, *e.g.*, N. T.2, 398, 400, 402, 405, 409, 414, 420, 452.

<sup>71</sup> Name of a male class.

<sup>72</sup> Name of another male class.

discussed matters, and Umbitjana said to the Thungalla, 'You and I sit down little birds', but Thungalla said, 'No, we sit down black-fellows, and we belong to the same country.' Then he said, 'You have got no father, you are my child, you are Umbitjana,' and it was decided that Thungalla was an opossum, because fur had grown on him like that of an opossum, and his eyes were prominent, and that Umbitjana was a grass-seed man, and that his name was Murunda."<sup>73</sup> Here, it will be noted, after having decided upon their classes, Thungalla and Umbitjana, they proceed to decide upon their totems. The Thungalla has good reason for determining his animal, but the grass-seed is attributed to the other without reason, by a sort of primitive social contract! In another tale, where a man is represented as arising from the grass-seed, the same attempt at aitiological detail is shown.<sup>74</sup>

The simplicity of the primitive mind could hardly be better illustrated than by this naïve invention; and the very obviousness of that simplicity, whereby, in the lack of such categories of the animal world as we possess, the savage is able without any sense of the irrational or impossible to attribute animal characteristics to his ancestors, shows at once that wonder is no more to be attached to the origin of this detail than to the other aitiological details already discussed. There was no criticism based upon a strict classification of the mammalia; to a naked, hairy savage, living as naturally as the beasts, a little opossum fur along his arms was no great thing! Originally, at the making of the legend, such a detail was not felt as wonderful. Later, of course, with the growth of a wider knowledge and keener criticism, such details would become marvels; but the Central Australian, most primitive of living races, has not yet reached the culture stage that embraces such knowledge. He may, indeed, be in advance of the ancestors who framed his legends; and so the road toward wonder may be in the making. Completed it is not.

It would be an egregious blunder if one of the chief elements of later wonder, present here in embryo, were passed over in

<sup>73</sup> N. T. 2, 409.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. also the legends of the Water-Totem, *Ibid.*, 418; Laughing-boy-totem, 422; Wind-totem, 444; Resin-totem, 444.



silence. The talking animal is of course one of the most common of details in wonder-stories. The totemic ancestor is from one point of a view a man: as such he of course talks as a man. From another point of view he is an animal, and goes by the name of that animal. Here, then, is an animal talking, with the best and clearest of rights to talk! In some cases the animal character is still stronger, even overshadowing the human character.<sup>75</sup> Obviously that is natural enough,—only a trifle of difference in emphasis along the same line of aitiological inquiry; it militates, however, for a remarkable state of affairs when centuries later the human character has dropped away, and there is left only an animal who talks with no good reason for talking! There is no intention of implying here that the entire wonder of talking animals takes its rise in totemic conditions. Probably several other origins will be found also. But what is claimed is, that in this origin of the talking animal there is no feeling of that wonder which, through the forgetfulness and growing sophistication of later ages, comes to be attached to the circumstance. There is the best of reasons for the talk: it is a man talking!

Once again attention must be directed to the type-legend for further comment. The crow-man saw one day a “lot of *inmintera*—that is, incomplete men and women—belonging to the Unmatjera tribe.” He engages in an attempt to make them perfect. Now these *inmintera*, or *intera-intera*, or *inapertwa*, represent nothing more nor less than one of the primitive attempts at explaining the origin of man. Sometimes it was the totemic ancestor who, ‘rising’ from the ground or Churinga, gave birth to the men of his totem in various ways, such, for instance, as by throwing crystals out of his body, throwing out his museles, or merely by looking at himself;<sup>76</sup> but among the Unmatjera there exists this peculiar belief in imperfect creatures, whose limbs were not divided, neither arms, fingers, legs nor toes, whose noses had to be added and the nostrils bored with fingers, whose mouths had to be slit open, likewise the eyelids.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Cf., e.g., the Eagle-hawk, N. T.2, 398.

<sup>76</sup> N. T.2, 430, 431, 400.

<sup>77</sup> N. T.1, 389; N. T.2, 156, 157; cf., also, N. T.2, 152, 154, 161, 149, 150, 345, 399, 403.

It is difficult to speak of these creatures in view of wonder. Certainly they are aitiological, and the cutting loose of the limbs, boring of the nostrils, and slitting of the eyes by the old crow<sup>78</sup> suggest an attempt to account for the human form and features. Now, inasmuch as all the aitiological details noted thus far have yielded no original wonder, there is strong presumption against assuming any original wonder here. I cannot, however, support that presumption with any evidence, theoretical or empirical. The most I am prepared to assert at present is, that in view of the greater differentiation of idea and image involved here over and above the other cases of human origin from the totemic ancestor, it would seem that the *inmintera* would sooner be felt as wonderful than would the animal-character of the ancestors.

There remains but one other detail in the crow legend that requires comment, and that is the Churinga. To speak of these briefly is to fall far short of appreciating their place and significance in the totem and lives of its members. Spencer and Gillen in their first volume have devoted a long chapter to the Churinga;<sup>79</sup> from the material there presented the present notes for our purpose are roughly put together. The term Churinga is applied chiefly to "rounded, oval or elongate, flattened stones and slabs of wood of various sizes"; the smaller ones are commonly called bull-roarers. Considerable mystery is attached to them, partly, no doubt, in order to impress the women and boys, who are never under any condition allowed to see them. "From time immemorial myths and superstitions have grown up around them, until now it is difficult to say how far each individual believes in what . . . he must know to be more or less of a fraud, but in which he implicitly thinks the other natives believe." "Especially in connection with the Churinga, there are amongst the Australian natives beliefs which can have had no origin in fact, but which have gradually grown up until now they are implicitly held." In the Alcheringa, each ancestor,

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<sup>78</sup> N. T.2, 157. Sometimes two creatures who lived in the western sky performed the operation. See N. T.2, 150.

<sup>79</sup> N. T.1, Chap. V.

according to the Arunta and certain other tribes, was closely bound up with his Churinga. With the Churinga the spirit-double of the individual is closely associated, and the belief is evidently a modification of the idea, found universally in folklore, that the soul as a concrete object may be placed in some secure spot for safe-keeping. In many of the legends cited the ancestor arises from a Churinga, just as our crow-man does.

Even in this short and unsatisfactory account there are already apparent several circumstances that make for wonder. The segregation of the Churinga to the possession of the initiated man, the mystery sedulously fomented, the air of deceit, the vacillation of belief, and the accretion about them of legends due to exaggeration rather than to fact,—all these are by now well-known indications of the presence of wonder. Nor is one's impression lessened by reading the long accounts of Spencer and Gillen. It should be noted, however, that the fear of the Churinga, among the women at least, may well overbalance any show of wonder;<sup>80</sup> while among the men its spiritual associations are scarcely of a sort (in view of what has already been said of the relations of the spirit-crowd and wonder) to heighten their sense of mysterious segregation with a wonder born of religious awe. As a whole, however, there seems a preponderance of evidence for, rather than against, a sense of wonder concerning these secret and extremely vital objects.

Before turning to the characterization of these legends as a whole, there is a particular and somewhat peculiar case, mentioned earlier in the same volume,<sup>81</sup> which deserves a moment's special notice. Among the Warramunga there is a totem ancestor who, unlike what has happened with every other totem ancestor except the laughing-boy (who is the echo?), has actually persisted from the Wingara to the present day.<sup>82</sup> This peculiar ancestor is believed to be a monstrous snake, and is called Wollunqua. "The Wollunqua," say our authors, "is regarded as a huge beast, so large that, if it were to stand up

<sup>80</sup> See above, pp. 88-90.

<sup>81</sup> N. T. 2, Chap. VII.

<sup>82</sup> N. T. 2, 226.

on its tail, its head would reach far away into the heavens. It lives now in a large water-hole called Thapauerlu, hidden away in a lonely valley amongst the Murchison Range, and there is always the fear that it may take into its head to come out of its hiding-place and do some damage. It has already been known, apparently for no particular reason, to destroy a number of natives, though on one occasion, when attacked, the men were able to drive it off. Some idea of what the natives feel in regard to the mythic animal—though it must be remembered that it is anything but mythic in the eyes of the native—may be gathered from the fact that, instead of using the name Wollunqua, when speaking of it amongst themselves, they call it *urkulu nappaurinnia*, because, so they told us, if they were to call it too often by its real name they would lose their control over it and it would come out and eat them all up.’<sup>83</sup>

It has been thought wise to mention particularly this Wollunqua, not because of its exaggeration of size, or its evident sanctity, or its wholly animal nature<sup>84</sup>—any one of these would render it remarkable, and the first at least, its size, would entitle it to a place in wonder—but because all these characteristics appear in their extraordinary vividness to be the result of bringing the remote home to the present. We have before this insisted that remoteness of the wonderful is not calculated to keep the heart thrilling with wonder.<sup>85</sup> Here, in the contrast between the more sober regard with which the ordinary totemic ancestor is contemplated and the striking concern displayed toward the Wollunqua, may be detected a fair example of that observation. This affluence of wonder, again, would in all probability be the fortune of every totemic ancestor could they all be conceived as still living. The constant insistence upon the Wollunqua’s stupendous length, as, for instance, that after traveling underground many, many miles his tail was still in its original resting place; the uniqueness of his position, inasmuch as this great progenitor is supposed to be the only surviving animal of his kind; the fearful approach to the mys-

<sup>83</sup> N. T. 2, 227.

<sup>84</sup> N. T. 2, 493.

<sup>85</sup> See above, pp. 123-124.

terious pool where he dwells,—all these are details that lift the Wollunqua into a place of notability in wonder as compared with the founders of other totems. A present god, as it were, is indeed a greater marvel than an absent one!

But what of the general character of these legends as a whole? In answering this question it is possible to speak of the totem legends collected in Spencer and Gillen's first volume as well as of those in the second; for the details that make up the tales of the first collection are practically identical with those of the second, which we have just discussed. Upon looking over these collections for the first time, the prevailing impression is one of sameness. Tale after tale repeats the same formula,—the same material and the same handling; so that reading one legend is equivalent to reading twenty. And yet, upon a somewhat closer examination, it is found that in proportion to the variation in distribution of the two sorts of details, aitiological and 'heroic', the general character of the legends varies from a meagre matter-of-fact list of answers to certain questions connected with the totem, on the one hand, to a considerably richer exploitation of the details involved in such answers, on the other hand. A division of character may thus be made into the heroic and aitiological; and though there may occur legends where the exploitation is too slight to admit of definite classification under one or the other head, the division will nevertheless be of real value in the greater number of cases. One caution, however, needs mention. It may be that the difference in length and richness of interest between certain of the legends is due rather to the fulness or meagreness of the report of the tale than to the original recital. Whether this be so or not, or where it is so, I am unable to tell. This ignorance is all the more distressing in view of a still stronger induction that may be made if the tales are in their original form. Until, therefore, further light is shed upon the question, it is necessary to restrain our conclusions somewhat tentatively within as modest bounds as possible. The attempt must be made to state them in such fashion that they will not be invalidated even if the lack of elaboration in many of the legends proves to be

due to the compression of the reporters, while they may be strengthened if the apparent contrast proves a real one.

Of the shorter, or more strictly aitiological character, the crow legend examined above is an example. The details are exclusively aitiological. There is nothing of what we have termed the 'heroic' detail,—that is, traveling underground, or mounting into the sky, etc. Questions closely connected with the tribe and totem are answered with no pause to exaggerate the power or importance of the ancestor. How the Unmatjera began, why a certain totemic ancestor was a crow, how the custom of circumcision and the like arose, what certain peculiar stones mean: these are the questions answered. Probably, also, the beforehand action of the two old Parthenic lizard men explains some circumstance of the Unmatjera economy. To these questions it is necessary to add only a few others in order to possess a fairly complete list of the aitiological subjects upon which the legends exercise themselves. How various other customs arose, how the different totemic ceremonies originated, what other features of the landscape mean, how the markings of certain animals were made: these, together with the aitiological details discussed above at length, give a good idea of the common motives of the various aitiological legends. Now, it has been pointed out that the aitiological detail is seldom, if ever, originally felt as wonderful. Only much later generations, whose keener and far more discriminating and reflective observation has become conscious of the categories of natural law and strict classifications of kind, are able to look back upon their primitive science and, through ignorance of its original character, pronounce it wonder and delusion. It is right, then, to assume that tales which are composed almost exclusively of such 'scientific' details are not as a whole wonderful to the savage. The only question is whether we actually have before us legends of simple and unelaborated character: that such tales necessarily precede the more heroic sort, or that their simplicity is due to a lower rather than to a higher development, are points that in the absence of evidence it is unfortunately impossible to determine. But to whatever circumstance, or set of circumstances, such tales are due, certain it is that tales so

predominantly aitiological are essentially devoid of the wonder element in the consciousness of those who make and rehearse them with an implicit belief in their character and truth.

The longer sort of legend, where the ancestor is felt more in a way that approximates, at least, to the heroic sentiment of later times, and where, as one may say, the ancestor is on the road to become a hero, must be illustrated by another quotation from the collection. Most of the tales of this heroic sort are rather lengthy—three or four times as long as the crow tale—and the full realization of their far more elaborate character can be gained only from the longest. One that falls somewhat short of this extreme elaboration must, however, do service here. It is the legend of

#### PITTONGU, THE FLYING FOX.

“In the Wingara, Pittongu, the flying fox, a Thapanunga man, arose in the country away to the north of the Warramunga and travelled south until he came near to Altunga in the eastern Macdonnell Ranges. He met a number of black-fellows who had lubras<sup>86</sup> with them, and among the latter two young ones whom he wanted to secure as wives for himself, though one of them was Naralu and the other Nungalla, and therefore neither of them his proper wife. After thinking how he could best secure them—because of course the black-fellows would not give them to him of their own accord—he killed a bandicoot and put some of the blood on his foot and pretended to be lame and so unable to go any further. The men went out hunting, leaving the women in the main camp, and the stranger sat down, wondering what it was best for him to do so as to secure the two women. Going a little way out into the scrub, so as to be out of sight, he changed himself into a dog and then came back again to the women's camp. All of them were there except the two younger ones, who happened to be out hunting in the bush, and when they saw him the old women said, ‘Hullo, here is a big dog coming up’, and they called to it, but the dog would not come near them and only snarled, so they left it alone. At dusk the two younger ones returned, and the dog at once went up to them wagging his tail and playing about them. The two said, ‘This is a very good dog for us to hunt with’, and it stayed with them. They tried next day to go in several directions, but each time the dog stopped and refused to go on, until at length they directed their steps towards the north, from which direction the man had come, and then the dog walked along with them. The dog went in the lead, rounding up the wallabies, the lubras following up behind. It drove the animals into holes, the mouth [sic] of which it then filled up with stones. At length the dog went on ahead, right out of sight of the women, and changed itself back into a

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<sup>86</sup> Consorts.

man. He returned to search for his spears and boomerangs, which he had secreted in the scrub. The lubras meanwhile came up and caught a large number of the wallabies, but were much surprised not to see any trace of the dog. Seeing the black-fellow approaching, they were frightened, but he said to them, 'Why are you frightened? I made the wallabies go into the holes.' Then he said, 'We will walk along my country now', but the women declined to go with him. However, taking his spear-thrower, he tangled their hairs together and threw them on a long way ahead of himself to a place called Athalta, where he halted for a time and where, for the purpose of making himself better looking, he knocked out a tooth. Then he camped close by Thapauerlu, the home of the Wollunqua, and there he pulled out another tooth. He was the first man to knock teeth out, and he did so because he wanted the lubras to think him good-looking. He carried with him *mauia* (evil magic), spears, tomahawks, stone knives, and various other implements. All the way as he travelled across the country he left spirit children behind him and threw the two lubras on ahead. From what is now known as the Elsey Creek he threw them on as far as Pine Creek, and there he finally left them and went up into the sky. A mob of black-fellows saw him coming and threw their boomerangs with their right hands, hoping to kill him, but could not touch him. Then they threw with their left hand and he fell down. As he fell they shouted out, 'Don't drop this way; drop with your head looking towards the Warramunga.' Accordingly he did so, and his legs stretched out right beyond Pine Creek. When he passed over the Warramunga country he dropped stone axes, which is why the natives of these parts are specially good at making the axes; in the same way he dropped stone-knives in the Tjingilli country, which is why the Tjingilli men now make the best knives, and then away to the north, he dropped barbed spears in the country where these are now made."<sup>87</sup>

Now this recital combines in a most interesting fashion the short aitiological information-tale and the elaborated heroic legend. The second half is mostly aitiological, and quite simply so; the first half is almost entirely heroic, and very richly so. The contrast between the two halves, or between the first half and the crow tale, speaks for itself. In this first half, the suspense of *dénouement* gained by meticulous detail, the suggestion of character, and the thrilling climax—or, in a word, the sense for story displayed—immediately lift us into the realm of narrative interest. Here is no mere answering of questions. Here is an adventure, well told, appealing to human instincts, resting its power on its appeal to human emotions. Here is that exaggeration of the hero's cunning, of his patience, of his power, that characterizes the art of the story-teller. Here, to be brief, is the beginning

<sup>87</sup> N. T. 2, 427-428; for other 'heroic' tales, see pp. 396, 405, 409, 424, 431, 435, 445, 451.



of the tale *par excellence*, the real home of marvel, that distinctive region where thrives most strongly that marvel which is born of the teller's desire to thrill and the listener's desire to be thrilled. And as it was predicted above that the marvellous would find its emphatic beginning with the 'telling' that passes later into literature and literary fiction,<sup>88</sup> so we here find that particular sort of detail which among the mass examined has appeared most inclined toward the wonderful—the 'heroic' detail as we have called it—making its appearance contemporaneously with the evidence of the beginning of the elaboration of an art of 'telling.' The aitiological detail is evidently expanded. The ancestor has an adventure in procuring his wives. He has all the heroic powers examined elsewhere, and others in addition. They can hardly be added by mere chance to the aitiological elements. There is no need for them as causes for anything. They make for interest, for story. They are exaggerations that hold the wonder. His power of transforming himself into a dog is a rarity in the collection; it is also a rarity in the life of the Central Australian to-day. Only the great and wonderful magician can accomplish such a feat. Again, Pittongu's power of throwing the two lubras ahead of him is a strictly individual touch; and the very dwelling upon it, the repetition and careful dwelling upon it even to the point of localizing the extraordinary feat, all bespeak a lively sense of rarity, of a perdurable wonder, almost of a marvel. Almost of a marvel: for the information as to the exact distance he threw them, from Elsey to Pine Creek, seems, in part at least, to be motivated by a very vivid sense of present-day impossibility. Then, too, the mighty extension of the hero's fall, the almost Miltonic picture of his giant limbs resting upon the country, as Satan's rested upon the sea of fire, is a further note of strong exaggeration. If there were time, other heroic details from some of the other legends might be described side by side with these. The mysterious, fearful, and secret *Kurdaitcha* men, who play a part half villain, half bogey; the mischievous Oruntja-spirits; the growling hearts, which oddly remind the reader of one of Poe's marvellous tales; another tremendous snake, whose head, like the Wollunqua's, can reach up into the sky: these can only be mentioned here as strengthening

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<sup>88</sup> See above, p. 74.

the present contention that with the development of a sense for story there is the addition of exaggerated and wonderful details.

Upon this point of the present inquiry, then, the finger of emphasis must be placed with determination. To be sure, even the most elaborate of these tales is, judged by modern standards, elaborated very meagerly; and one is impressed far more by a stock sameness of detail, and almost cast-iron tradition of formula, than by any evidence of a free, plastic imagination. And yet there is elaboration, beyond the aitiological 'science' of primitive life, into a sort of wonder; there is a lifting up of emotion and imagination into 'story-interest.' Thus comes into light a faint beginning of the marvellous of literature proper.

We have traveled a long way in order to gain a careful approach to this faint beginning, and fully as much attention has been paid to what is not wonderful to primitive consciousness as to what is. Nay, more space has been given to the negative side; because we conceive that the first and most important step in the present research is to show how elements which in a later age and developed literature come to be regarded as wonders, originated without any aroma of thaumaturgy. But here at least there is marked a positive stage in the course of conscious wonder, —an initial stage, but nevertheless unmistakable, starting out (we see it in the very act of development) from the non-wonderful aitiology of a narrow consciousness, advancing with an exaggeration of familiar elements, gathering impetus with the addition of further heroic elements, and culminating in a realism of action and detail by which exaggeration magnifies the past and its great characters, and brings home for a moment to the mind of the listener the wonders of a remote Aleheringa. Thus, in connection with the most important social phenomenon of the Central Australian, the totem, we gain our first positive, empirical result in the study of the marvellous.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Other tales not directly connected with the totems—'myths' as Spencer and Gillen call them—tales of the sun, moon, stars, rainbow, whirlwind, and the like, are nevertheless made up so closely after the pattern of the regular totem legends that it is quite unnecessary to consider them separately. The only point to be emphasized is that amongst this primitive people there is as yet no difference of treatment of wonder or pre-marvellous elements as they pass from social and ancestral legends to the contemplation and explanation of the greater and more remote features of nature. These so-called myths are very few in number, and may be found in Chapter XVIII of the first, and Chapter XXII of the second volume of Spencer and Gillen.

## CHAPTER V.

### CONCLUSION.

In the preceding chapters an essay has been made toward uncovering the sources and the rise of the marvellous in literature. Throughout those chapters we have been looking always forward to the stage where literature would begin to take up into itself and transform the elements of experience, custom, and belief; the point of view has been from non-literary beginnings toward literary inceptions, rather than the reverse. But, now that the first stage in the inquiry has been completed by the survey of the sources in primitive custom and belief, and the rise therefrom of wonders into that first faint dawn of narrative literature, the semi-heroic tale, it is proper to pause and from our present vantage look backward over the fields that have been traversed. Thus the actual results for literature may be rescued from the mass of psychological and ethnological detail and set clearly and emphatically before the literary student.

In taking such a retrospect it immediately becomes evident that the progress toward these faint literary beginnings of the marvellous has been through a series of narrowing circles; and, furthermore, that each of these circles has revealed the marvellous in a characteristic aspect. From the historical view of Greek criticism of fiction and marvel it soon became evident that literary criticism itself was originally a development from the moral and philosophical criticism of the wonders and marvels that the Greeks had inherited, through their myths, from the unphilosophical and uncritical days of their remote beginnings. There, indeed, we saw what Dr. Tylor so eloquently refers to as that "momentous phase of the education of mankind, when the regularity of nature has so imprinted itself upon men's minds that they begin to wonder how it is that the ancient legends which they were brought up to hear with such reverend

delight, should describe a world so strangely different from their own. Why, they ask, are the gods and giants and monsters no longer seen to lead their prodigious lives on earth—is it perchance that the course of things is changed since the old days?"<sup>1</sup> In that stage men wondered at the wonderful, marvelled at the marvellous. And in their earnestness they came to take into questioning consideration not only the more striking and offensive of the old wonders, but the whole field of fiction as well. Gradually, very gradually, they passed from the first severe denunciations of impious fiction, through the steps of rationalization, allegory, euhemerism, and the like, to a proper literary criticism that was divorced from the moral and philosophical view, and could contemplate the marvellous in literature under that imaginative light which is the true and distinguishing character of the realm of literary art. Thus, finally, a new view—what might also be called the modern view—the view of poetic truth and artistic illusion—came into being; and the marvellous entered into a new stage,—that of aesthetic development.

The second circle of our inquiry was somewhat narrower; for it embraced, not the general field of the criticism of wonder, but the more particular question, how do men wonder, or, what is wondering psychologically speaking? Here an examination was made of the processes that had been tacitly subsumed in the first field by the criticism of their results. And once again a character of the marvellous was brought to light. In the course of a description of the complex nature of wonder, it grew clear that as wonder ascends in power and intensity it passes through an ascending series of rarities and improbabilities, until, reaching a culmination in impossibility, it is fitly called marvelling. Moreover, in view of the fact that in imaginative literature, the home of exaggeration, there has always existed a standard of ideal possibility, whereby the impossible ceases from being absolutely and prosaically impossible, it was immediately apparent that in literature this marvelling finds its peculiarly appropriate sustenance and field of activity. Religion, with its aspects of faith and superstition, offers a similar

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<sup>1</sup> *Primitive Culture*, I, 275.

field and support. Hence the naturalness, not to say the inevitability, of the close association between literature and religion in the matter of the marvellous. Here there was a recognition that the marvellous would find its place in literature, and thrive there under the fostering guidance of religious faith and superstition, long before it would be ready to enter upon its aesthetic development under the tutelage of a properly emancipated literary criticism.

Armed with the subjective criteria gained from this field, primitive mind, custom, and belief, and the relations between literature, religion, and the marvellous, were contemplated in their simplest possible manifestations. Two great facts made their appearance. In the first place, it was recognized that, in a vast number of cases, what is wonderful or marvellous to the minds of later generations was simple fact to the primitive consciousness. To understand, therefore, the marvellous elements in literature, it became necessary to determine so far as possible what marvels were wonderful, and what not wonderful, to the primitive mind. This meant an examination not only of the character of early mind, but also of the sources of marvel-elements in early custom and belief. Such an examination brought out the second significant fact,—*viz.*, that there can be distinguished more or less clearly two tendencies—one making against wonder, the other for it—which run through many primitive customs and the original mental attitudes toward them. The more primitive the people, the greater the former tendency; the less primitive, the greater the latter. Moreover, the latter tendency was seen to be characterized by the principles of segregation and individualization, whereby details and powers are differentiated from the communal mass. Gods and priests, magicians and magic as ‘magical,’ and the custom of taboo, were seen to illustrate this tendency. But underlying all these, and the entire tendency, was the mental trick of exaggeration, often joined with deceit. Through exaggeration the tendency to wonder was abetted; through it, details which were not originally and distinctly felt as wonderful became wonderful. But exaggeration is primarily a matter of ‘telling,’ of rehearsing. It is mind and mouth that lend exaggeration to a matter; the tale

springs spontaneously from the lips of the exaggerator. Thus, in this field also, literature, or at least its faint beginning, was seen to be peculiarly bound up with wonder. And the greater the exaggeration, the more of a wonder. As in the history of criticism the marvellous was seen to be closely related to the beginnings of that discipline, so here, with the beginnings of 'narative' literature, wonder is woven into the fabric of the tale by the very exaggerating force that contributes so largely to its origin.

The last and narrowest of our circles took us from the general field of primitive mind to the particular field of the beliefs, customs, and legends of one of the most primitive of existing races, the Central Australians. Guided by the sense of direction gained in exploring the larger field, and supported by the descriptive criteria of the previous chapter but one, it was not difficult to detect among this people illustrations of our general observation that many a wonder element, recognized as such to-day, was plain matter-of-fact to the savage. Many such elements were named, and their origin briefly suggested, so that at some other time their progress to wonder through later development may be fitly observed. It is not claimed that anything like entire success has been achieved in the difficult task of differentiating among these primitive tribes the details that are wonderful from those that are not wonderful. The most that could be done in this first sketch of the situation, limited as we are by an insufficiency of direct evidence, as well as by the novelty of the attempt, was to make clear the general truth of our conclusions by such a fulness of detail that a mistake in the judgment of a single detail here and there would not invalidate the entire argument. It was in following up the first positive step in the exploitation of wonder that we were brought to the particular character of the marvellous that this chapter had to offer. The particular case of actual legends concerning the ancestors of these Australians proved the accuracy of the general observation upon the relation of literature and marvel which was developed in the preceding chapter. Here, indeed, was detected a simultaneous and associated growth of wonder and the hero-tale from the religio-scientific details of the aitiological col-

lections,—a growth that in either case was motived by the force of a natural exaggeration. This exaggeration was evident both in its wonder-making influence upon elements of custom and belief, which originally were matters of fact, and also in its creation of certain so-called 'heroic' details out of the fund of general experience. Thus the hero-tale, bred from what might be called an aitiological ancestor (even if he were a real ancestor the term might be retained), and forming the beginning of a narrative literature, comes to take its place as aiding the tendency toward wonder by accommodating it with a natural field for its activity. Such an alliance is bound to produce the higher reaches of wonder in a comparatively short time. Finally, it should be emphasized again that the first step into 'literature' was taken through the agency of a social institution, the totem. Further research into the subsequent stages of the development of the marvellous in literature must take this fact as a cue to the perdurably social aspect of the question.

Our four circles of progress have thus each shown a peculiar affinity between the marvellous and literature. The discussion of the psychological aspect of the question adequately showed the reason for this affinity. Briefly, in a word, it may be said that both are all compacted of imagination; and that the latter, literature, offers the most natural playground to the former. It would be easy here to wax philosophical and attempt to raise a theory upon the inter-relations of religion, literature, and marvel,—a theory that would have as much bearing upon later and even present-day cycles of thought and expression as upon the epoch of beginnings. I believe that in such a system the marvellous would furnish the connecting link or common element; and that the better understanding of its glamor would tend as much to emancipate the faith of religion as to inspire a new and more spiritual romanticism. The marvellous has given the romantic tone to both religion and literature; the analysis of that tone, which after all is the purpose of these studies, would, if brought home to the minds and hearts of a race, mean a new day of creation, springing with brighter and whiter light from the old barbaric days of gloom and mystery.

But no such theory is to be traced here. Instead, the remark

may be hazarded that the peculiarly intimate relation between literature and wonder pointed out in this tentative essay has never been sufficiently contemplated. Every romantic epoch brings round sufficient evidence of the reality of the relation, and ample guarantee for the dignity of a careful examination into its nature and origin. The present advances in psychology are helping to minimize the subjective difficulties of the subject, and the nearer to national literatures the study advances, the greater the amount of direct evidence; modern ethnological research is daily increasing the data of the remoter reaches of the problem; the freedom of criticism in the present, together with its wealth of apparatus, offers an opportunity of dispassionate, if not exhaustive, study such as seldom before has been extended to the scholar. On the other hand, the advantages to the theory and history of literature would surely not be inconsiderable. The examination should be extended through other culture-grades of savage and barbaric races; the development into wonder of the aitiological details should be noted, classified, and explained; the creation of new wonders through individual exaggeration of elements of thought and experience, should be considered in conjunction with the rise of new economic conditions as they affect the increasing significance of the individual in society; the characteristic variations in the wonder elements should be examined, and their treatment should be traced as they pass from ancestor-tale and legend to myth, from myth and legend to the self-conscious literary art of the epic, from early epic to other types—tragedy, comedy, satire, novel—in their later development: all the course of characteristic variations under these changes of circumstances should be noted and correlated with the passing of one literary epoch after another. What a field is opened in the European Middle Ages! What a contrast in the recurring successions of creative and critical periods! Nor would the least fascinating aspect of the subject lie in an exploration of oriental marvel-literature and its comparison with occidental wonder.



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## ERRATA.

Page 40: Note 91 should read, See above, pp. 33-34.

Page 41: Note 96 should read, See above, p. 34.

Page 44: Note 110 should read, See above, p. 43.

Page 45: Note 116 should read, See above, p. 43.

Page 45: Note 118 should read, See above, p. 42.

Page 57: Note 20 should read, See above, p. 52, note 3.

Page 57: Note 21 should read, See above, p. 55, note 14.

Page 59, line 4: Read *that is*, instead of *that, is*.

Page 97: Line 16 should follow after line 22.

Page 103, note 28, line 3: Read *experiential*.

Stoic & Neoplatonic allegorical interpretation.

(Libert I 476 ff. vinctus (2d ed).)

Latin

Fulgentius in F. B.

6th-8th

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Zeller, as noted in Libert 477 n. 1.

William B. Eerdmans, The First Philosophy of Plato, 1898.

Plato, *Republic*, 6th-8th c. B.C.

Plato 429 c. - 347 B.C.

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